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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

AN AUTOMOBILE DUEL

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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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An Automobile Duel;

OR,

Nick Carter and His Best Friend Work Together.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A CRIMINAL AT BAY.

Billy Studley, better known in some respects as Jasper Ryan, stood alone on the corner of Sixth Avenue and Thirtieth Street, in the city of New York, in the full glare of the myriad electric lights that were glowing around him. The time lacked five minutes of one o'clock in the morning; the day was, or would soon be, Wednesday; the place, everybody knows, was where the notorious and sometime nefarious Haymarket Theater invite with its lights and music the unwary youth to dissipation.

Ryan—we shall generally make use of that name in referring to him here—was outwardly as cool and calm as if he had not just now made one of the most daring escapes from the arm of the law that is recorded in the annals of the New York police.

A uniformed policeman stood within twenty feet of him, and occasionally glanced in his direction; but that minion of the law had no idea that the man who stood so quietly near him had just shot one policeman and struck another one over the head with a black-jack with such force as to crush his skull and leave him helpless and dying, perhaps, where he had fallen.

It is worthy of record right here, that neither of those victims of Ryan's desire for liberty died. Both recovered, and thus, although he then believed that he had added two murders to his other crimes, in reality he had not done so.

Ryan had been captured and arrested in his own home earlier that same day by Chick and Patsy, of Nick Carter's staff; he had been taken by them to police headquarters and turned over to the authorities there. He had been subjected to what is known "on the force" as the third degree, the effort having been to make him disclose the hiding-place of about four hundred thousand dollars in cash that he had stolen from the Credit and Exchange Bank.

But Ryan had disclosed nothing.

He had only smiled in reply to their questions down at headquarters, and the third degree, so dreaded by criminals, had held no terrors for him.

Detective Petrosini, of the central office, had conducted the examination, and at last Ryan had said to him:

"Look here, Petrosini, you'll pardon me, I know, if I say something to you, straight from the shoulder."

"Yes. What is it?" the detective-officer had asked him.

"This: You are only wasting your time and breath in questioning me. I don't fear you in the least, and I cannot be made to fear you. I stole that money that you are

asking me about, and I know exactly where I could lay my hands upon it now if I were free to do so.

"I am under arrest, and you intend to put me through to the full limit of the law. I know that, and I also know that nothing I could say would mitigate in the least the consequences of what I have done.

"As I said a moment ago, you have got me now, and maybe you can hold me. I don't know about that; but if you have got any sporting blood in you, I'm willing to bet you a thousand even that you never bring me to trial."

"I'm not betting with criminals," replied Petrosini coldly.

"No? Well, let that go. What I was on the point of saying to you, was this: I don't think you can hold me. I don't think you, nor any of your men, not even Nick Carter, will ever succeed in bringing me to trial."

"We'll see about that."

"Of course we will. I haven't finished yet."

"Go on."

"I've got that cash cached where you can't find it. I've got it where I *can* find it when I happen to want it. I am here. Prison is before me, but I'm willing to take my medicine, if you and those associated with you think you can administer it.

"But that is the part of the circumstance I am permitted to doubt.

"Don't waste your time and breath in fruitlessly questioning me. I shall not tell you a word about the money, and the Credit and Exchange Bank will never see a dollar of it again.

"That is all, Mr. Petrosini. I shall not open my mouth again on this subject, even if you talk upon it until you are old and gray."

"It is possible," said Petrosini quietly, "that I might tell you something that *would* interest you."

"I admit freely that it is quite possible. You are a very interesting gentleman when you choose to be so. Just now, you are insufferably dull."

"Perhaps there is another subject that you will discuss with me, Studley—or Ryan."

"I prefer to be addressed as Ryan now, if it is all the same to you."

"Well, then, possibly there is another subject that you will discuss with me."

"It is quite possible."

"I refer to the young and beautiful woman who lives up-town in the city, and whose first name is Lydia; far[illegible]ibly I can induce you to discuss her with me."

pos[illegible]o: I don't think you can."

"N[illegible]u admit that there is such a woman?"

"Yo[illegible] seem to be rather well convinced of it already.

"You[illegible]ould I admit or deny it?"

Why sh[illegible]d to talk with you about the time you last saw her—somewhere in the neighborhood of twenty-four hours ago."

"I have just now said that I would not discuss her."

"It *was* about that time when you saw her last, wasn't it?"

"You may answer that question for yourself as you see fit."

Petrosini rose from his chair and took a step nearer to Ryan; then he said slowly, but with deep earnestness:

"Ryan, I had determined, when I came in here to hold this interview, to make a serious charge against you, concerning that young and innocent woman. But I already know that you are not guilty of the charge I would have made, and I have no heart to pretend to believe it when I do not. It is bad enough as it is, and——"

"What in the world are you talking about?" Ryan asked, still smiling.

"Lydia is dead," was the slow and calm reply.

Ryan started, bit his lip in the effort to hold back an exclamation that half-arose, turned white, and starting to his feet, seized the back of the chair he had been seated upon.

"You lie!" he remarked presently. "You lie, Petro."

"No; I don't lie. I tell the truth. You know by my manner that I am telling the truth. Lydia is dead. She was murdered. I had thought to charge you with the crime, but as I have——"

"*Stop!* will you? Wait a moment. Let me—let me have a moment, please."

Petrosini and the three officers who were with him in that room remained perfectly still while Ryan fought out his battle of self-control before their eyes. The veins in his forehead stood out like whip-cords; his fingers clenched and unclenched themselves; he breathed hard, and his face went as white as chalk. At last he spoke.

"Well, Petrosini?" he said.

"I don't know just what time it was when you left her," said the central office detective; "but it could not have been long after your departure when the man known as Boston Wheeler arrived at the house. He had seen you on the train and finally followed you to the house. It was you whom he intended to kill, but you had gone."

"Go on, please. Tell me all you know about it."

"That is practically all I do know about it, save that Wheeler shot himself dead soon afterward. He left a confession, charging you with her murder; but he had already written another confession in which he admitted having killed her himself. He had evidently forgotten that first paper when he wrote the second one."

"He is dead, you say?"

"Yes."

"And Lydia is dead?"

"Yes."

"Who found her? Did you?"

"No. Nick Carter's second assistant, Patsy, found her.

He had encountered Boston, who took him to the house, intending to charge you with the crime evidently."

"Was she still alive when Patsy found her?"

"Yes. She was breathing, he tells me. She talked a little after he discovered her, but she did not fully recover consciousness, so her information was not definite. But she said sufficient even then to convince Patsy that it was not you who struck her. Patsy ministered to her as best he could, while she lived, which was only a very few minutes. She died practically in his arms."

"Thank you. I will remember that in Patsy's favor, if I ever run across him again—which I am more than likely to do. Is there anything more?"

"No. I think not."

"I left her at one o'clock last night, Petrosini. I had made plans with her by which she was to meet me in another part of the world, and in the meantime we were not to communicate with each other at all. Boston must have gone there soon after I left."

"That is what we suppose. We do not know."

"It doesn't make any difference now. I suppose you had a double motive in telling me about this, didn't you?"

"I am afraid I don't understand you."

"One of the motives was your natural kindness of heart; and the other one was to discover, by my manner, if I had left all that money in her care. I will answer that question for you. I did not. I gave her a thousand dollars, which was all that she required until I could communicate with her again. Are you satisfied that I am telling you the truth?"

"I think you are. Not because you prefer the truth, but because it would not have been like you to have left the money with her, or to make her acquainted with its hiding-place."

"You are right about that. Only one person in the world knows where that money is, and he stands confronting you at this moment."

"I believe that."

"Then won't you let up on the questions, please? I shall not answer them."

"Yes. I am going to send you to the Tombs now. In the morning you will be taken before a magistrate and committed for trial. If you should make up your mind to tell us about that money in the meantime, I can promise you that things will be made easier for you; but I cannot give you any more definite promise than that."

"I shall not change my mind."

"You may. You may."

"Did you say that you were going to send me to the Tombs now?"

"Yes; with these two officers. You will be handcuffed to each of them; one on either side of you. They are both armed, and the distance is not great, so don't try to-night to make good your boast of escaping. You will get hurt if you do."

Ryan's reply was a smile; that was all, and presently he was led away.

CHAPTER II.

JASPER RYAN'S UTTER COOLNESS.

Ryan had been an athlete all his life.

Nick Carter had said of him more than once, that with the exception of Sandow, he was the only man he had ever met who was a match for himself in strength and agility; for Nick and Billy Studley, which was his right name, were schoolboys together. And they had been close friends, too, for many years, until Studley adopted a path in life which the detective would not pursue and could not condone.

Ryan—we must continue to call him that—smiled even more to himself than to the others when he was told he was to be sent from headquarters to the Tombs under the escort of two of the officers who were in the room with him at the time.

He had already sized them up very carefully, and he did not doubt that if half a chance offered, he could easily get away with them.

All he wanted was the opportunity, and he believed he could make that. Opportunities are oftener made than found.

Nobody ever knew rightly just how it happened, and Ryan never told the particulars, but it is supposable that by some trick known to him he managed to swell his wrists when the handcuffs were put on them so that they fitted loosely; and having succeeded in doing that, it was an easy matter for him to slip his hands out of them when the time came to do so.

He knocked one of the officers down, and shot him with his own pistol as he was getting up again. Nobody knew where he had secured the black-jack with which he succeeded in striking the other officer. He had been searched, and no such thing was found upon him.

But he had it, and he used it with such success that the second officer fell a victim to it, and Ryan walked away from the two of them at his leisure.

He had selected a moment, too, when they were practically alone in the locality where it happened.

Nobody saw the thing occur. Nobody heard about it at all until the regular policeman on that beat found his two colleagues, later in the night, and sent them to hospital.

Even then it was some hours before the truth was known as to how they had met with their mishap, and in the meantime Ryan had made good his "getaway."

One might think that it was a foolhardy thing Ryan to do, to stop on that corner, near the Ha[illegible]agined

Theater and expose himself as he did, so soon after making his escape.

But Ryan never did things by halves. He always calculated well what his opportunities might be, and he was perfectly well aware that some hours must elapse before there would be a hue and cry out for his recapture.

He liked it, too, this silent defiance of the powers that rule; he enjoyed standing there within twenty feet of a policeman, when that very officer would cheerfully have given the buttons off his coat to have known who he was, and to have had the honor of capturing him.

After a moment, and just as the clocks in the neighborhood were on the stroke of one, he turned abruptly and entered the Haymarket.

Well he knew that for a time at least, there could be no safer place in the city for him than that, for the double reason that it was about the last place in the world he would be looked for, and also in that policemen seldom go there, unless they are called to do so by some unforseen event.

Ryan was acquainted with the proprietor, too.

He had been captured too late in the day for the evening papers to have contained anything about him, and while he knew that he would be recognized, he had little fear that anything was known about his arrest.

"Hello, Charlie!" he greeted the proprietor, as he entered and found the affable Charlie Noonan standing like a statue, just inside.

"Hello, Billy!" was the reply. "How are you? It is quite a time since I saw you. Been out of town?"

"No; but I am going out of it very soon. I was in the neighborhood, and thought I would drop in for a moment."

"Always glad to see you, you know, Billy."

"Oh, yes. Say, Charlie, I wonder if I could leave a message with you, to be delivered when you have an opportunity?"

"Sure."

"Oh, better still, if you can provide me with paper, envelope, and a stamp, and let me sit at your desk for a moment—eh?"

"Sure thing. Right in there. Help yourself, Billy."

And Ryan went in and wrote the following letter, which he afterward posted:

"To Patrick Garvan,
"Care of Nicholas Carter,
"New York City.

"Dear Patsy: I hope you won't mind my addressing you in that way. It is how I happen to feel toward you just now. Petrosini has told me about what happened in that little house up-town; about the death of Lydia, and that you were there and ministered to her in her last moments. You may not believe it, Patsy, or you may think that I took a strange method of showing it, but I loved that little woman with all the heart there is in me. She wasn't legally my wife, but I deliberately committed bigamy to make her believe she was, and my only hope now is that Boston did not tell her the truth, or that she did not believe it if he did. I am writing this letter to thank you for what you have done, so far as she is or was concerned; and also to ask you a favor. I wonder if you will grant it?

"I want you to write me a letter, if you will, and tell me all about what happened up there. I want to know just what she said to you, and just how you found her; I want to know all about it, Patsy. Will you write it?

"You may send the letter, addressed to Jasper Ryan, General Delivery, Boston G. P. O. I will find a way to get it all right, without being caught, even though all the detectives in the country follow it. Will you do that, please?

"I have managed to make my escape from a pair of cops to-night. I am rather afraid I hurt them both badly. I am not sure that I didn't kill one or both of them. I am sorry that it had to be, because they had personally done me no harm; but I had to get away, and from now on I shall hold life very cheaply, whether it is my own, or another's that is at stake.

"Tell Nick, if he pursues me, that I know he will only be doing his duty, and that I will cherish nothing against him for it; only assure him that if we come together, it will be his life or mine. I know him and he knows me. I haven't a thing against him in the world, only if we come together, and I have to do it, I will kill him if I can, rather than be taken, and as quickly and cheerfully as if we had never known each other. I shall not molest him or you, or any of you, unless you get in my way. Then, look out. That's fair, isn't it?

"Remember me to Chick. Tell him that I hope he will keep out of this business, too.

"For yourself—*you* are the only man in the world against whom I will not raise my hand to strike, and for that very reason I don't believe you will take up the chase after me. You wouldn't consider that as playing even, and I know you well enough to know that you won't play any other way. After what you have done, I couldn't hurt a hair of your head, so keep out of it, Patsy; there's a good fellow!

"That's all, I think, so good-by. They won't catch me. I don't know where I shall go or what I shall do, but I have a small fortune in cash at my disposal, and with it I shall make the best of my opportunities. I have dropped my real name for good and all, and so I sign myself, Jasper Ryan."

Having sealed that, he wrote another note which he addressed to one of the distributing clerks in the general post-office at Boston. It read:

"Dear Jack: I have been doing wrong again, as you will soon hear. Never mind about that. My case is hope-

less as far as I am concerned. I have lost little Lydia, and I don't much care what happens to me now. I wasn't with her when she died, and I have written a letter to the man who was there, asking him to write to me and tell me all about it. I have requested him to address the letter to the General Delivery at your post-office, and to address me as Jasper Ryan, of course.

"Now, will you keep an eye out for that letter, and when it arrives at the office, will you take it out of the mail and hold it for me? You have my permission to open it and read it, and if it contains anything other than I have stated, you may hand it over to the police as soon as you care to do so. But as I know it will not, I ask you to hold it for me until you hear from me, and then to forward it as I shall direct. I *know* that you will not betray me, so I don't even ask you not to do so. You know how sincerely I loved Lydia, and for her sake I believe you will do what I ask. JASPER."

Having addressed both letters, he sealed them and stamped them; then he rejoined the proprietor.

"I'll drop these in a mail-box as I go out, Charlie," he said. "Much obliged to you. You won't see me again for a long time. Good night."

"Good night, Billy. Where are you going?"

"I don't know that. I'm on the flit, Charlie. The cops are after me. You will hear about it soon enough. Probably it will be in the morning papers."

"Can I do anything to help you out, Billy? Do you want any money? If you do——"

"No, thank you. It's awfully kind of you, Charlie. I'll not forget it."

"Isn't there something that I can do? If there is——"

"Well, I don't know. I might write to you, later on, for some information, if you think you would be disposed to give it to me without thinking it your duty to tell anybody that you had heard from me."

"You know me well enough to answer that question for yourself."

"That's right, Charlie. I do."

"Write to me when you get ready to do so. Nobody but ourselves will know anything about it."

"Thank you again. I will. Shake, Charlie. Good night."

"Good night, Billy. Take care of yourself."

"By the way, old man."

"Yes?"

"I am afraid that I hurt a couple of cops rather badly to-night. You'll read about it in the paper. Would you mind making it your business to find out if their families are all fixed, so far as money is concerned? If they are not——"

"I'll see that they are. You can make good with me when you get a chance."

"Thanks."

"And if you want a friend, or get hard up for dough—you know where to send."

"Charlie, you make me wish I had been a better man; but—good night."

He hurried out through the door, and was gone before Noonan could utter another word to him. Then he turned down the avenue and mounted the elevated station at Twenty-eighth Street, and a moment later was speeding up-town.

He left the train at One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street, and walked up the hill to the Washington Inn, where he found a hack, and this he engaged to drive him as he directed.

Less than an hour later he stood before a house that was set back in the middle of a block, far up-town in New York, and presently he passed through the gate and ascended the steps to the front door.

It was the house in which Lydia had died; the house he had purchased and furnished for her, and to which he had taken her, as his wife; the house in which she had breathed her last about twenty-seven hours ago.

He knew that her body was not there now, but he wished once more to see the room in which she had died, and after looking about him a moment, he fitted a key to the lock on the door and entered.

CHAPTER III.

THOMAS COUGHLAN, OF CHICAGO.

We are told that there are no ghosts; we are told that ghosts do exist; and either statement, I believe, depends entirely upon the standpoint from which one views the subject.

Certain it is that there could be no ghosts like those that are conjured up by the memory. The ghosts of lost ideals; the ghosts of neglected opportunities; the ghosts of mistaken desires; the ghosts of wilful negligence. And, ah! These last!

When Jasper Ryan at last stood in the room where Lydia had died, they all trooped around him, these ghosts; and he saw then, as he had never seen before, that it was not so much the little sins of commission or omission that counted, but that it was the accumulation of them all, with their consequences visited upon innocent parties—as they inevitably are.

"I wish—I wish—I wish that I could change it all," he murmured aloud. "But it is too late—too late."

Was it real or was it his imagination which brought a reply to him out of the darkness? Was it true or was it only his imagination that made him believe he heard a voice say:

"It is never too late."

"Too late," he repeated, as if in reply to those imagined

words; and then he turned and rushed out of the house, leaving the doors open behind him as he departed.

His carriage was awaiting him where he had left it, and with it he returned to the Washington Inn, where he dismissed it, after which he walked down the hill to the station of the elevated road, and so journeyed downtown.

Daylight was just beginning to assert itself when he left the train at Twenty-third Street, and strode rapidly along that thoroughfare to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, which he entered as boldly as if he were not a hunted criminal.

But Ryan believed in doing things boldly if they were to be done at all.

He was without baggage, of course; but he was immaculately dressed, as he always was—and this happened to be one of the few hotels in the city which he had never been in the habit of frequenting, and where his face was unknown; or at least where it was not likely to be recognized.

He went straight to the desk and spoke to the clerk who stepped forward to receive him.

"I have been up all night, and I wish to sleep all day," he said. "Can you accommodate me?"

"Certainly, sir."

"With the assurance that I will not be disturbed? That is to say, have you a quiet room away from the noises of the street that I can have?"

The clerk inspected his registry-board for a moment, and replied that he had.

"One with a bath attached?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will take it. I will pay for it now, if you don't mind, since I have no baggage with me; but, however, I wish you would have me called at seven this evening, and at the same time send a barber to me. I will need a shave."

"Very good, sir; but you don't have to pay in advance unless you wish it"—as Ryan exhibited a huge roll of bills—"I remember your face very well, sir."

"Do you, indeed? Who, pray, do you think I am?"

"I should say that you are Mr. Thomas Coughlan, of Chicago. I was a clerk in the Great Northern Hotel, sir, for some time, and I think I have seen you often."

"Quite right; quite right, although I don't happen to remember you."

"I knew you the moment you entered the door, sir."

"Indeed! That is extraordinary—quite so. And how long is it since you have seen me?"

"It must be two years at least."

"Ah, yes. Well, I am very glad to have seen you again"—and Ryan, with great deliberation, wrote "Thomas Coughlan, Chicago," in the register. "I should prefer, however," he added, after he had written the name, "to pay my bill in advance. It will save coming to the office to attend to it before I go out."

"Very well, Mr. Coughlan."

"Don't forget the call at seven this evening."

"Certainly not."

"Nor the barber. That is important."

"All right, sir."

"And one more thing."

"Yes, sir."

"At 7:30 I would like a waiter sent to me so that I can have my dinner ordered before I come down."

"Very good, Mr. Coughlan. It shall all be attended to. You may depend upon it."

"Thank you very much indeed. It is very pleasant to meet an old acquaintance in this way. Now, if you will have me shown to my room—and by the way!"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you please be particular to have the chambermaid instructed not to be banging keys into the lock of my door all day, as they are in the habit of doing? I have had no sleep for two nights, you know."

"I will see that you are not disturbed, Mr. Coughlan."

"Thank you again, and good night—or rather, good morning."

Ryan went smilingly into the elevator; and he was thinking:

"Chance resemblances are sometimes fortunate things. I don't suppose, really, that I look any more like Mr. Thomas Coughlan, of Chicago, than I do like the mayor of New York; and yet there was something about me to suggest Coughlan to that clerk. Well, anyhow, it gave me a good name to sign on the register, and it assures me of perfect safety, and therefore perfect rest, of which I stand very much in need."

He lost no time in making good use of the bath, when he was once in his room, and within fifteen minutes of the time he came out of it, he was sleeping as soundly and as peacefully as if nothing had happened to disturb his serenity.

And the clerk had been as good as his word. The room was as silent, almost, as the proverbial tomb, and not once was there a sound to disturb the sleeper.

Nor did he awaken during that long day, so complete had been his weariness of mind and body when at last he found himself within the seclusion of four walls where none on earth would seek him.

At seven in the evening, precisely, he was roused, and fifteen minutes later, when he was half-dressed after his cold plunge, the barber appeared.

Then came the waiter, when the barber had about half-finished; and Ryan languidly gave his order—an order that would have been sufficient for two; but he was very hungry.

He directed, however, that it be served in the room. He also requested that the afternoon and evening papers be brought to him.

Can you imagine him, somewhat later, as he sat there

in the seclusion of that room, calmly eating of the bounteous repast he had ordered, while he read the articles that the afternoon papers had published about himself? He smiled over the theories that were advanced regarding his method of escape after he struck down the two officers who had him in charge. He read with genuine pleasure, that both men were expected to recover, although he had arrived at that pass where he would merely have shrugged his shoulders if they had both been dead at that moment.

He was reported to have been seen in a dozen different places, not one of which was correct.

There were many shrewd men on the "force" who had winked mysteriously at the reporters, and assured them that the police would put their hands on the man when they were ready, but that just for the moment they preferred to let him have his head, in the hope that he would lead them to that money he had stolen.

Finally, when he had finished both his meal and the papers, he folded each one of the latter carefully so that it would appear as if he had been studying the financial pages of some of them, and the racing reports in the others, after which he threw them negligently upon the couch and one or two of the chairs.

Then he lighted one of the cigars that had been brought to him, and selected an easy chair in which he seated himself to do some thinking—for he had not as yet had time for serious thought, nor had his brain been sufficiently free from other cares.

He had paid for each service as it was rendered him, so that when the time should come for him to leave, he had only to leave the key in the door and the door wide ajar, to give notice that he had abandoned his room—and after that to walk quietly out of the famous hostelry, and depart wheresoever he would.

But he had no notion of leaving as yet.

It was far too early in the evening for that, he thought. He had figured on departing about half-past ten, and as yet it was barely past nine.

What his thoughts were as he sat there in the chair with his head resting against the back of it and his feet upon another one, nobody knows.

He did start from his reverie once and rise to make use of the telephone service, and to call up a famous garage on Broadway, and ask for the manager.

When he had secured a response to his summons, he said to the manager of the garage:

"I require, this evening, a high-power, first-class, limousine-body automobile, with a competent chauffeur. I shall want it for at least a week. Can you supply it?"

"I think so; yes, sir. Who are you, and where are you?" was the reply.

"I am Mr. Thomas Coughlan, of Chicago. I am at the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"Very good, sir. Do you wish to know the cost of it?"

"Not now; no. You may tell the chauffeur, and when we leave the hotel I will pay him for the week in advance, and I have no objections to his stopping at the garage long enough to give it to you. If I should keep the machine longer than the week, I suppose I could pay him, could I not? Or at least make other arrangements with you by telephone?"

"Certainly—certainly."

"Mind, I require a competent chauffeur, and a high-class machine."

"You shall have the best of both, sir. Any choice as to make?"

"None, so that I have one that can go and keep going."

"All right. I have the very article, and the right man also."

"Then have them at the Twenty-third Street entrance of the Fifth Avenue Hotel at exactly half-past ten. If he is two minutes late, the deal is off. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir. The chauffeur will be on time. Give me the time by your watch now, that there may be no mistake."

Time was compared between the two, the agreement that a week's rental was to be paid in advance was repeated, and the deal was made.

After it, Ryan seated himself in the chair again with a satisfied smile on his face; and he murmured to himself:

"I wonder how long I can masquerade successfully as Thomas Coughlan, of Chicago? Evidently he is rather a well-known character somewhere—probably a sport of some kind. Ah, well, if the name serves me for a week, that will be all I require of it."

Ryan was smiling again, rather complacently, when he was startled into sudden tension by a quick, though not loud, "tap-tap-tap!" against his door, and he sprang to his feet, backed across the room, dropped his hands into the side pockets of his coat, and quietly called:

"Come in!"

The door opened; a man entered, closed the door behind him, came a step forward, and stopped.

"Pardon me for this intrusion," he said smilingly. "I have called to make the acquaintance of my namesake. I am also Thomas Coughlan, of Chicago."

CHAPTER IV.

EXACTLY TEN-THIRTY.

There was a good-natured grin on the features of Ryan's caller, which was at once reassuring, and Ryan, who was a quick and sure reader of character, at once removed his hands from his pockets and relaxed something of the tension he had been under.

He saw instantly that this man was a stranger to him, and also that *he* was a stranger to the man who had called. He saw also that the call was a genuine one—one of curiosity alone.

With a short laugh Ryan stepped forward and extended his hand, which the other man grasped heartily.

"Happy to make your acquaintance, old chap," he said. "Awfully good of you, dontcherknow, to call upon a fellow in this way. Take a seat, won't you?"

The real Coughlan dropped into a chair—and Ryan waited for him to do the talking.

"I've been in town about a week," he said, "and all that time I have been expecting a friend of mine from the Windy City to show up here at this hotel. So it has been my habit to drop around almost daily—or nightly, rather—and look over the register. Well, imagine my surprise when I dropped in this evening to find that I had registered here myself, this morning!"

"It must have been somewhat surprising."

"There is still a funnier part to it, if anybody should ask you."

"What is that?"

"I was at a banquet last night. I drank rather a lot of wine. I do not now remember all that I did and did not do; see?"

"Yes."

"The signature on the book wasn't mine, but, nevertheless, the handwriting of it is sufficiently like mine to have startled me."

"Rather gave you a shock, eh, old chap?"

"I should say! At first I was going to speak to the clerk about it and ask him if I had actually been here; but then I was sure I had not. But the more I thought about it the more I was puzzled, and so I decided to say nothing, but just slide quietly up to this room and find out who the devil the other Coughlan might be."

"I'm decedly glad you thought of it, old man."

"I went to the key-clerk as solemn as you please and asked him if Mr. Thomas Coughlan, of Chicago, was in, and he said I was—I mean that you were. Then I took the elevator, and here I am."

"Will you have a peg of some sort? Shall I ring and order you something?"

"No! No, no; I've sworn off. But, say——"

"Well?"

"You talk like an Englishman; not like a Chicagoan—if you'll pardon me for saying so."

"So I am."

"Which?"

"An Englishman, lately migrated to Chicago. I suppose you've lived there all your life, Mr. Coughlan, eh? Three months would more than cover my residence there."

"Oh! So *that's* the way of it. Well, anyhow, it's a great relief to find out that there are not two of me. I was scared stiff for a moment when I saw that name."

"I don't blame you, old chap, after what you said about last night. I was out all night myself, and have slept all day as a consequence."

"I thought I was another Jeckyl and Hyde, for fair. If I had seen that thing this morning instead of this evening, it would have been me for a sanitarium. But say——"

"Well?"

"I thought all the Coughlans were Irish."

"So they were, originally, I believe. Possibly I call myself an Englishman for the same reason that you doubtless call yourself an American; and after five years, I shall be an American also."

"Bully for you! Say!"

"Well?"

"We must be related, somehow, somewhere."

"I've no doubt of it—back in the dark ages."

"Let's call each other Tom; what do you say?"

"Delighted, old chap."

"It's easier than saying Mister Coughlan to each other. That sounds silly. We'll be cousins, too, after we get back to the old town by the lake. We'll have a lot of fun out of it—that is, if you are anything of a sport. I'm a fool horse-owner, myself. I mean by that, that I lose anywhere from ten to fifty thousand at the game every year. But then, I enjoy it. It's worth it—to me."

"If you can afford it."

"Oh, I can afford it all right."

"All the better."

"I say, when are you going back, Tom?"

Ryan threw back his head and laughed heartily, for the scene was intensely amusing to him, and also he saw in the occasion the most fortunate thing that could have occurred to him in his present plight. He glanced at his watch before he replied. Then he said:

"I start in exactly thirty-five minutes."

"The devil you do! There is no train—that is, no decent train at this hour of the night for the West."

"I have got one of my own. It isn't exactly my own, dontcherknow; I've hired it. I leave from this hotel at ten-thirty, sharp."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Gee! I wish I was going with you. In my present state of mind it would suit me to a dot. I haven't done a thing but drop money ever since I came here, and I think it's me for the tall timber about now."

"Why don't you do it, then?"

"What? Do you mean it?"

"Certainly I mean it."

"By Jupiter!"

"I should be delighted to have your company—er—Tom. Eh, old chappy! How's that?"

"If you mean it, I'll call your bluff. But thirty-five minutes—whew! That's rather short notice. What route are you going to take?"

"It doesn't matter in the least. Any one that will suit you best," replied Ryan, with perfect truth.

"I've only got a grip with me in the shape of baggage, but it happens at the present moment to be well up toward Harlem."

"We can stop for it, if you like. I haven't anything at all. I had a very well-filled Gladstone, you know. I left it on a bench at the station while I went to get a cigar, and, by Jove! old chap, when I returned for it, it wasn't there. Deuced stupid of me, wasn't it?—but on me word I never thought."

"Ho, ho, ho! Aren't you wise to the thieves over here, yet?"

"Oh, yes! We have quite as many on the other side. I was only absent-minded. But the result is that I'm traveling light. It's rather late to purchase anything at the shops to-night, isn't it?"

"It sure is."

"And so I decided that I'd let these togs I have on do, until I arrived at some other town."

Ryan looked at his watch again, and added:

"We've ten minutes now. Are you going with me, cousin?"

"You bet your life I'm going with you! It's a cinch, that's what it is! Only, you must let me bear half the expense!"

"Oh, we'll discuss that later on, when there is more time."

"I'd like to stop a moment or two at one place I know, and let them know that I'm on the fly. They might think I had been run in, or had fallen off the dock, or had met the strong-arm man somewhere."

"If you'll agree not to stop more than two minutes——"

"I'll do that."

"I have another suggestion, too."

"What is it?"

"You suggested at the opening of this interview that we could have some fun in Chicago, later on, as the 'Two Crogans'—I mean the two Coughlans, of course."

"Yes."

"Then don't spoil it now by giving the joke away to your friends."

"Well, I guess not. Say, Tom, you're a corker! I'm glad I hunted you out of your nest. I begin to feel as if we had known each other always, and as if we are really related. I say!"

"Well?"

"How much a week have you got to pay for the machine you've hired, as you call it?"

"I'm blowed if I know, old chap. I made the arrangements over the telephone from this room. I told the manager at the garage that I wanted a limousine-body, a high power, first-class car, with a competent chauffeur. The chauffeur is to tell me what it will cost for the first week when he gets here. I am to give him the week's hire in advance, and he is to drive around to the garage, and turn it in to——"

"Oh, say! You make me tired!"

"Why so, old chap?"

"They'll soak you for fair!"

"Eh?"

"They'll 'do' you to the queen's taste. Let's go halves, and buy the machine, and when we get out there, sell it—if we want to sell it—for what we can get for it. We'll save money by doing that."

"It's such a deuced bother bargaining, dontcherknow?"

"I'll do the bargaining. Have you got enough money in your clothes?"

"Oh, yes; I suppose so."

"Then you leave it to me when we get to that garage. You gave the name of Thomas Coughlan, didn't you? Well, I'm as much Thomas Coughlan as you are; see?"

"Yes. I think it is an excellent idea. Only I'd suggest one thing."

"What's that?"

"That you insist upon hiring the chauffeur he sends with the car, for under the circumstances he would assuredly send his best one."

"That's so."

"And also—er—convey the impression that you're going for a trip South." He looked at his watch again, and rose from his chair.

"Exactly ten-thirty," he said. "Time is up. The car is waiting at the door. Come."

"What about your hotel bill?"

"It's paid."

"Then—*we're off!*"

And the two Coughlans from Chicago left the room together, descended by the elevator to the parlor floor, passed around to the stairs, and so down to the Twenty-third Street entrance of the hotel.

CHAPTER V.

A QUICK GETAWAY.

It is perhaps due to the reader that a word of explanation should be indulged in, just here. It may have occurred to you that this is a story of the adventures of one Billy Studley, alias Jasper Ryan, rather than a history of one of Nick Carter's cases.

But you must be patient, and being so, you will presently find that the detective will be very much in evidence, indeed.

It has been necessary—it still is necessary—for the sake of the chronology of our story that these experiences of

Jasper Ryan, following upon his escape from the officers who were taking him to the Tombs, shall be fully recorded, in order that the subsequent movements of the detective may thoroughly be understood.

What we are relating now is taken from the notes of the detective, and was in no part revealed by that master criminal, Jasper Ryan, himself; and so you see that after all is said, although the activities of Nick Carter in person have not yet appeared, this is still a history of one of his most difficult and perplexing cases.

To return, then:

As Ryan and the real Thomas Coughlan were passing along the rather narrow hallway between the stairs and the entrance from Twenty-third Street, it must be remembered that he was, of necessity, keenly upon the alert, lest he should encounter a face he recognized, and therefore a person who would recognize him.

And since the reports in the evening papers, wherein his two names had been printed in large type, such an encounter would be a calamity indeed.

This was the gantlet he had to run—and he believed the only one—between his rooms and the waiting automobile.

Once that was reached, he felt that he need have no further fear; at least, for the time being.

His hands were in his side pockets in that same debonair fashion with which he had summoned his present companion to enter the room after he knocked upon the door; but each of those hands grasped a weapon—*and Jasper Ryan had no idea of being taken.*

He purposely kept a step in advance of his companion, although they appeared to be walking side by side, for he wanted the way clear to act, if action should be necessary; and his nerves were, of course, at a high tension.

As they stepped through the door, Coughlan reached out his hand and rested it gently on Ryan's shoulder, intending only to call his attention to something he had to say.

But the effect was electrical—and surprising.

Ryan wheeled like lightning, and so suddenly as nearly to overturn his companion, and although he did not take his hands from his pockets, those pockets were raised so that he could instantly have fired through them.

But he saw his mistake the instant it was made, and he laughed aloud.

"What the devil's the matter with you, anyhow?" demanded the somewhat exasperated Coughlan.

Ryan laughed again.

"You rawtha stawtled me, old chap; that's all. Tell you all about it when we are once embawked. It's a bounding good story, too. Sorry I disturbed your equilibrium. Come on. That must be our car yonder."

He indicated, with a nod of his head, a handsome, black car that was standing directly in front of the entrance.

"Go ahead now," he added rapidly. "You said you wanted to do the bawgaining, dontcherknow, and that being the case, I'll just climb inside and leave you to do the rest. You might as well claim the car now, if you're going to do the bargaining when we get to the garage."

The two stepped forward quickly across the sidewalk to the curb, and Coughlan, now taking the lead, addressed the chauffeur.

"Is this the car for Mr. Thomas Coughlan?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir."

Ryan opened the door and stepped inside the instant he heard that reply, and then he sank back upon the cushions with a sigh of relief.

A moment later and Coughlan was beside him, and they were being driven rapidly toward the garage.

"It's an all right car, Tom," he said eagerly, as he dropped down beside Ryan. "A Packard, and a good one, if I am any judge. What do you suppose they'll want for it?"

"I'm sure I haven't an idea, cousin," laughed Ryan. "And to tell you the truth, I don't much care."

"Well, it will be close to eight thousand dollars, if I am any judge. Could you stand half of that, if it should come to a buy? We could easily get the money back, and more. I've got an even five thousand with me, barring two or three hundreds. Shall we buy, as I suggested?"

"Suit yourself, old chap. I invited you on this trip with me, and it seems to be assuming the complexion of a business venture. But I know a good car when I see one, so go ahead if you wish to. Here, I'll give you——"

He reached down into his pocket and produced the big roll, but his companion interrupted him.

"Put it back," he said. "I'll ask for that when it's needed. I'm going to ask first what the rental, including chauffeur, is by the week. If it's low enough, we'll let it go at that. If it's too high, we'll buy."

It was at that moment that the big car stopped before the garage, and Coughlan immediately went inside, leaving Ryan to the enjoyment of his cigar.

The chauffeur left his seat and was about to follow Coughlan inside the building, when Ryan called sharply to him, so that he turned and came back to the open door of the limousine.

"Are you the chauffeur who is to drive us?" Ryan asked him.

"I'm the one who is to drive Mr. Coughlan. I don't know anything about you," was the quick reply.

"I happen to be Mr. Coughlan also, my friend. Would you object to accepting a five-dollar bill from me now, as an earnest of what may be in store for you?"

"Not at all, sir. Thank you, sir. What can I do for you, Mr. Coughlan?"

"You can take off those goggles and show me your face for one thing, and you may tell me your name for another."

The goggles came off instantly, and at the same time the young man replied:

"My name is Allan Gwynn, sir. You will appreciate why I wear my chauffeur's mask as much as I can. It is a terrible burden for a young man like me to carry around with him—a face scarred as mine is."

"Great Heaven, I should think so!" exclaimed Ryan, almost involuntarily, for the disfigurement of the chauffeur's face was something frightful. To be sure it was only the upper part of it that was scarred, but that had been done in a manner so frightful, and to impart to the features an expression that was nothing less than hideous. "Put on your mask again for Heaven's sake!"

"I hope, sir, that the sight of my features will not interfere with the job of driving you and your brother. I'm really an excellent chauffeur. I know my business, sir."

"Certainly not. You startled me, that was all. I will get used to it. Only don't let me see it any oftener than is necessary, will you?"

"No, sir. Here is your brother, returning."

"He's not my brother. He's my cousin."

Coughlan came rapidly across the pavement at that moment, and thrusting his head in at the door, exclaimed, although in an undertone:

"Give me fifteen hundred, Tom. I've bought the outfit for sixty-five. I have already given the duffer my five thousand. You can give me the other seventeen-fifty later on."

He turned around then, while Ryan was getting out the money, and spoke to the chauffeur.

"They tell me that your name is Allan Gwynn," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"And that you are the best, although the homeliest, chauffeur in New York. Is that so?"

"I can assure you of the latter statement, sir, much to my sorrow. I usually resent such a remark, but I know that you do not mean it unkindly."

"I never mean anything unkindly, young man. I have just bought this machine, and I want to engage your services. The manager says that we can have you for any length of time we may want you, provided you will agree to return to him after we are through with you. He says he is paying you fifty a week. What advance will you accept and go with me, everything found—everything? Be quick, now."

"Make it seventy-five, and I'll go you, sir—only——"

"Well, only what?"

"You haven't seen my face. You might not want me."

"Oh, hang your face! I mean that kindly, too. Climb back on your seat and stay there, unless there is something inside that you particularly wish to get."

"No, sir."

"All right. Wait here. be back in a jiffy"—and he was; with a bill of sale for the machine in his grasp.

"Tanks full up?" he asked of Gwynn, as he came across the pavement.

"Yes, sir."

"Everything shipshape for a long run?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, your present destination is Cleveland, Ohio, unless the order is changed later; but just at the present moment you may run down-town as far as the Albany Hotel. I've a few friends there whom I wish to see for a moment. I shall not be in there above two minutes, after which I wish you to stop in Eighty-third Street near the Drive. I'll show you the house when we get there."

He got inside the car, and closed the door after him, and they started rapidly forward.

"I call that a quick and a good bargain, Tom," he said confidentially, as he dropped down upon the seat beside Ryan. "I didn't know that I had so much commercial instinct in me."

"It is all right, cousin, as long as we get the car," replied Ryan coolly. "Remember one thing, however. I stand by bargains."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that if you are inside the Albany longer than two minutes, I shall go off without you, notwithstanding your greater interest in the car."

"I won't be a minute. Don't you fret. I only want to throw a jolly at some friends whom I know I will find there; that's all."

When the car stopped in front of the Albany, and Coughlan left it, Ryan immediately loosed the latch of

the opposite door, and sat there prepared to leap out at any instant; but not a thing happened save that within the prescribed two minutes, Coughlan returned, leaped into the car, and it started forward according to the orders already given.

"Now for my grip," he said, "and then I resign myself again as your guest. By Jove! Tom, I seem to have taken full charge of affairs, eh? Grabbed 'em right out of your hands, didn't I? Well, that's a way we have in Chicago."

"That is precisely what I wished you to do, old fellow. It relieves a chap of so much trouble, dontcherknow. But all the same, since the expedition is mine, I will take charge of it after we leave the house in Eighty-third Street."

And he did so, as will be seen.

CHAPTER VI.

CONNER OF THE SECRET SERVICE.

And now let us inquire into Nick Carter's part of the affair.

It will be remembered that the assault committed upon the two officers by Ryan, while not of itself too late to have had the news of it in the morning papers, was, nevertheless, not discovered in time for them to have an account of it; it was only the afternoon papers that told about the affair; and even then it was with reluctance that the police gave it out.

But we must also remember that Ryan visited the Haymarket Theater, and there wrote a letter to Patsy, the contents of which we know.

That letter was mailed, as we are aware, during the early hours of the morning, and was therefore delivered at Nick Carter's house about seven o'clock, or in time for Patsy to find it awaiting him at the breakfast-table.

He read the letter through twice, gazed at the ceiling a moment, and then read it a third time, after which he passed it across the table to his chief with the remark:

"I think we've got a beat on the newspapers this time."

Nick, who had perceived from Patsy's manner that something out of the ordinary was contained in the letter, received it in silence, read it, and then, as Patsy had done, ran through it a second time; then he put it in his own pocket with the remark:

"I'll keep it, Patsy, for the present. I want to think it over."

"You are welcome to it, I'm sure," replied the young assistant. "Shall I do as he asks me to do?"

"Do you mean in regard to the letter he wishes you to send to the Boston post-office?"

"Yes."

"Most certainly."

"And then what?"

"I haven't decided about that yet. I'll visit headquarters after breakfast, I think, and see what they have to say down there."

They lapsed into silence which lasted several moments after that; but presently Patsy spoke again.

"Chief," he said, "I would like to ask you a question of ethics."

"Go ahead, Patsy. I know what the question is already, but ask it in your own way."

"Studley—or Ryan, as he prefers to be called now, and I don't blame him for that, speaks in that letter about what he calls playing fair. He announces that he would not raise his hand against me under any circumstances, and claims that because he has so decided, I ought not to concern myself about his recapture."

"Well?"

"I want to know if you consider his position well taken. I wish to know if there are any ethics in the case to prevent me from taking up the chase against him?"

"Most people, Patsy, would regard that fact as a very great advantage in a case of this kind. You would be a sort of immune."

"Pardon me, chief, but that isn't quite an answer to my question."

"Well, Patsy, I have never yet known of a criminal case where any ethics of any kind were due to the offender. A criminal is outside the law, and therefore he is outside the consideration of ethics. If you accept his dictum, you are merely permitting him to make terms with you. Because you did something that touched his heart, he writes to you as he has done, but you are in no way responsible for what he writes, and are not therefore bound by it."

"I understand you.

"If he chooses to consider that he is indebted to you, that is his affair. You did not do kindness to Lydia for Studley's sake, but for Lydia's—and as an act of humanity which you would have done for anybody; which you would do for him, now."

"That's true."

"There is another point, too."

"What is it, please? I want to get my mind clear on these points."

"Studley—we must call him Ryan, and really I prefer it so—I hate to think of my old schoolmate as such a scoundrel—Ryan is in one sense as guilty of Lydia's murder as was Boston Wheeler, the man who killed her. It was Ryan's fault that she was murdered."

"I see."

"That letter, Patsy, binds you to nothing."

"Thank you, chief."

"And, moreover, as he says in the letter, I know the man, and knowing him, I do not hesitate to say to you that if you should drive him into a corner, and the only way in which he could get out was by killing you he would do it, notwithstanding what he says in that letter."

"You think so?"

"That is the way I view it."

"If that is so, well, then I think I would feel better about it."

"I think it is so. Let me tell you something about him."

"I wish you would."

"He comes from a splendid family; there is no better in the land. We were boys together, and, as boys, were chums—inseparable. I don't think that as a boy I ever had a friend who was dearer to me than Billy Studley."

"Then it is harder for you than it is for me, to follow him."

"No. It is not hard at all, for the reason that he long ago cut himself off from all consideration from me. But that isn't what I wish to say."

"Well?"

"We grew up together; we exercised together; we went into athletics together, and as boys, we loved each other. But there was, nevertheless, always some sort of a barrier between us. I did not know what it was in those days, but now I know that it was the depravity that was in him that I subconsciously realized without knowing it.

"But the point is that I know him now. I know him to be cold and crafty. I know him to be implacable, relentless when in pursuit of a purpose, calculating, cool under the most trying conditions, always master of himself, and usually master of those who surround him. I know him to be as brave as a lion and as cruel as a tiger. He fears nothing, laughs at everything, and if you had saved a dozen Lydias, they would not count if you happened to stand in his way. And there is another thing about him that is worth remembering."

"What is that?"

"I have just told you that we used to exercise together. Patsy, the man is almost, if not quite, as strong as I am. I do not know of an accomplishment that I possess, which he does not also possess in very nearly as great a degree, if not quite so. This would sound egotistical to any one but you and Chick; but you both know what I mean."

Both assistants nodded their heads with emphasis.

"I think, Patsy, that you need feel no hesitation in taking up the chase against him, in case I should ask you to do so; but I haven't done that yet."

"I want you to do so, however, if you will."

"We will see about that. I think now that——"

He paused, for the door opened, and Joseph entered, stepped aside, and announced:

"Mr. Conner."

Nick sprang to his feet, and so did both assistants, as the Washington secret service agent entered the room, for, as the readers of the Nick Carter histories will remember there was an exceedingly warm friendship between Conner and Nick Carter; a friendship that had lasted many years.

"Conner, how are you?" exclaimed the detective, extending not one hand, but both. "It was good of you to make Joseph bring you right in here. Sit down and have some breakfast."

"Had it, old man, an hour ago. How are you, Chick? Hello, Patsy! Well, well, well; it seems good to see you all again. I am just back from the other side. Been chasing all over Europe after a fellow that Uncle Sam wanted to see very badly."

"Did you get him?" asked Patsy.

Conner cast a reproachful glance upon the lad; then he laughed, and nodded.

"I have been away a year and a half, Nick," he added, "and the chief thought I had earned a short vacation. I took the midnight train from Washington, and here I am, to see the best fellow in the world. I suppose you are up to your eyes in work, as usual."

"When am I ever idle, Conner?"

"Blessed if I know. What have you got on just now? If it is anything worth while let me help you."

"I thought you were on a vacation, Conner."

"Bless you, Nick, wouldn't it be the prettiest kind of a vacation to work with you for a while——unless indeed you'll shake the whole business for two weeks and go away into the woods with me."

The detective shook his head.

"I couldn't do that," he said.

"Well, then, if you can't go with me, I'll stay with you, if you'll have me."

"If I'll have you?"

"What's on the reel?"

"We were just discussing a letter that Patsy received this morning."

"A good case?"

"Why, yes, if we are to consider it a case. When did you arrive back from Europe, Conner?"

"Yesterday morning. Took the ten A. M. train for Washington; arrived there at four, and, as I said just now, left there again at midnight and came here."

"Do you happen to remember Billy Studley? I introduced him to you once, long, long ago."

"Oh, yes, I remember him very well. A tall, handsome chap, wasn't he? Once a schoolmate of yours, or something like that?"

"You've a good memory, Conner."

"Sure. What about him?"

"He went wrong a few years ago. I dropped him entirely. There is a kink in his gray matter somewhere. I'll tell you the story about him."

"Do."

The detective commenced then at the beginning, and told the whole tale about William Studley, alias Jasper Ryan, down to the moment of the present discussion.* And when he had concluded he passed over the letter that Patsy received that morning.

"Looks to me like he was a clever chap, Nick," was his comment as he returned the letter. "It's a good case, and if you're going after him, I'd like to butt in and help you; under your orders, of course."

"I'm sure I'd like to have you do it."

"Then it's settled. You see I come in the nick of time, too. This fellow Ryan knows every one of you well, doesn't he?"

"He knows Chick and me thoroughly. He has had some experience with Patsy, but I doubt if he would recognize him if he should meet him on the street."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that. Anyhow he doesn't know me. It's fifteen years since you introduced us, and there's no danger of his recognizing me. I wouldn't know myself as I looked fifteen years ago, Nick. Now, what's your plan?"

"We hadn't formulated one yet. In fact, we had not thought about it. I had an idea of going down to headquarters this morning, but I have changed my mind about that."

"Sure. Let headquarters alone. Let them manage their own case in their own way, and by the same token, if they should send for you, as they probably will, tell them that you are otherwise engaged. Let Carter, Conner & Co. handle this case. What do you say?"

"You seem to be as eager as if you were not just off on a vacation."

"I am."

"Then it's a go. Shake."

CHAPTER VII.

HOW GREAT DETECTIVES BEGIN WORK.

"Let's go up to your study, Nick, and have a general discussion of the matter," suggested Conner, as soon as the detectives had finished with their breakfast; and accordingly they adjourned at once to Nick's "den," where he had thought out so many difficult problems.

"I always feel as if I were in the magic parlor, Nick, when I enter this room," the secret service man remarked as he dropped into a chair. "It is like a lexicon, this place; it has an answer for everything. You have done so much thinking here, that the room is full of solved problems—and did it ever occur to you that all problems are somehow related?"

"Assuredly it has."

"Well, now for Mr. Ryan. Shall we pursue our old method, Nick, of one questioning the other in order to find out what really is in our minds?"

"Yes."

"What, then, in your opinion, knowing him as well as you have in the past—what would be his first move after he struck down those two policemen last night?"

"He would be as cool as if nothing at all had happened. If he heard anybody approaching before he could get out of sight, he would probably bend over the two men, and as soon as the approaching one came in sight, call to him

*See 577 of the Nick Carter Weekly.

—and he'd have the check to send that other man to find an officer."

"Suppose the 'other man' were an officer, also?"

"In that case they would have found three instead of two this morning."

"We don't know, of course, if they have found anybody yet. We have heard no news of it. We have only Ryan's letter."

"It's true. You may depend upon that. Whatever else he is, he is not a boaster."

"All right. We'll take that for granted. Now, as you know the man, what would, in your opinion, be the next move?"

"He would walk as calmly away from the spot as if he were taking a morning stroll."

"And then——"

"He would turn the first corner he came to."

"And then run for it, eh?"

"No. He would doubtless board a car, and ride uptown somewhere."

"Taking the chances of being recognized?"

"Yes. He would enjoy that. But, mind you, he would be ready to kill any one who sought to interfere with him."

"Suppose in that stroll, or ride, up-town, he had met you face to face; what would have happened?"

"He would have shot me dead, if he could."

"I see. I am beginning to understand his character a little."

"Do you think he would make for a railway-station and take a train out of town?"

"No; for he would know as well as we do that before he could arrive anywhere, his description would have been wired to every city in the country."

"What would he do, then?"

"I think he would first visit the house where Lydia was killed."

"You are presupposing that he knew about the death of Lydia."

"I am presupposing that Petro told him about that during the examination in which they tried to make him tell where the money is hidden."

"I see. It isn't at all likely that he would remain there a long time."

"No. I don't think so."

"What would he do then? Skip?"

"He wouldn't be in any hurry about it. What I really think he would do, is this: I think he would seek some quiet place where he was reasonably sure of safety for a few hours, and there he would think out the whole matter—just as we are trying to do now."

"I see. He would reason it out from the standpoint of the other side."

"Exactly. He would ask himself this question: 'If I were in control down at headquarters and another man did what I have done, what would I then do to catch him?' That is about the way he would go at it. And I'll tell you right now, that if he had been a detective instead of what he is, he would have been a dandy."

"Good! You give me an idea."

"Well?"

"Put yourself in his place for a moment, will you?"

"I'll try."

"Let me have another look at that letter, will you?"

"Here it is. It was written with a steel pen, if that is what you want to find out."

"It was, Nick. You may put it back in your pocket. Now, if it was written with a steel pen it follows that it was *not* written with a fountain pen, and from that we conclude that he went to some place to write it. Now, where do you suppose he would go, at that hour of the night, to write such a letter?"

"There you've got me, Conner. Not to a hotel; and, besides, if he had gone to a hotel to write it, he would have taken especial delight in writing it on the hotel paper. No; he must have gone to some all-night place, where he was known, and asked the privilege of writing it. You see, the facts of his arrest were not generally known as yet."

"A restaurant, think?"

"Hardly that. Rather too public, even for his nerve. Possibly a drug-store, where he might have purchased the paper and envelope—but this sheet of paper is torn from a pad."

"I have an idea," said Patsy.

"What is it?" asked his chief.

"Well, if I had been in his place and wanted to write a letter, and had been such a rounder as he has, I would have remembered that a place like the Haymarket, for instance, would be about the safest in the city for me. He could easily get permission to write a letter there, whether he was known to the proprietor or not."

"That is a good guess, I reckon, Patsy," said Conner. "But it doesn't much interest us to know where he wrote

the letter save to assist us in following his movements. We will say, for the sake of argument, that he did go there to write it. Now, Nick, do you think he wrote the letter before, or after he went to Lydia's house?"

"Before, assuredly."

"Why, assuredly?"

"Because he must have written it within an hour or two after he had learned of the death of Lydia. He was still grateful to Patsy for what Patsy did. After he had been to the house his gratitude would have been forgotten in the grief he would feel there."

"That is rather far-fetched, but I reckon it'll go. Now, Nick."

"Yes?"

"This is all guesswork on our part, of course, but if, after injuring the two coppers, he strolled away leisurely, and made his way up-town as far as the Haymarket slowly; if then he stopped long enough to write a letter and probably to talk a bit with some one as well; if, after that, he went way up toward Fort George, where Lydia's house is located; if he remained there fifteen minutes, and then came back down-town again—as he must have done—as I reckon time, it must have been daylight, or very near it, when he got back to civilization, eh?"

"Yes."

"Daylight would be a bad thing for him; and he knew that by that time his escape had been discovered."

"Certainly."

"He wouldn't dare take a train out of town then."

"No."

"He would seek some place where he could hide until to-night."

"Precisely. That is what I meant when I said that he would wish to seek some place where he could think the case over from our side of it before he made any effort at all to get away."

"I see."

"He knows, no one better, that most criminals are caught because they are in too great a hurry."

"Exactly. They run and bring suspicion upon themselves by doing so, when if they stood still nobody would suspect them."

"He knows the game, Conner."

"Now, Nick, putting yourself in his place, and knowing him as you do; or, better still, putting yourself in his place and doing as *you* would do under like circumstances, what would *you* do?"

"I was just thinking of that."

"Well, what's the answer?"

"I would go to a hotel where I was not known—if there happened to be one in town—and take a room. I would pretend that I was full, and had been out all night, or at least I would make some excuse for wanting to sleep all day, and I would make it a point that I was not to be disturbed until a certain hour in the evening."

"By Jove, Nick, I believe you have hit upon the very thing that fellow did!"

"I think so also; though I doubt if it would have occurred to me without your questions, Conner."

"Well, that is our old method of working out a hard case. Now, what sort of a hotel would you select? A 'For Men Only,' A Raines Law, or——"

"What! Dressed as he was? Certainly not. I'd select a first-class one, and the more first-class and costlier, the better."

"Good! The Waldorf? The Astor? The Knickerbocker? The Gotham?"

"No. Ryan, in his own person as Studley, is far too well known in each of them. He would have to register an assumed name. That wouldn't go with a clerk who knew him, and besides, it would create suspicion. And again, he knew that the afternoon papers would have the story of his escape."

"Well, then, where?"

"I'll have to give that up, Conner. But I'll tell you what we will do."

"Yes?"

"We'll make out a list of the few that remain, that would, according to our ideas, fill the bill for him. Then you will take a few of them—that is, we will divide them up among us, and we'll visit each and find out who may have registered at any of them at about that hour this morning."

"Go on, Nick. The idea is splendid."

"We'll take down the names—or at least remember them—of any man or men who may have registered at any and all of them about daylight this morning, and we'll meet back here at two this afternoon."

"There certainly isn't any danger that he will break cover before dark."

"Not the least in the world—unless he has made some arrangements for a disguise."

"Do you think he might do that?"

"No, I do not."

"Why not?"

"He is too proud, in his strange way, for one thing; for another, he would rather be on the alert and ready to fight. No; I don't think that Ryan will undertake a disguise at any stage of the game. He is too self-reliant—too bold."

"He's the sort that would rather fight it out in the open, isn't he?"

"Exactly."

"Then hadn't we better get a move on us?"

"Yes. At once."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IDENTITY OF COUGHLAN.

When the four detectives looked over the list of hotels that would come under the requirements of Ryan as already outlined, they discovered that there were really only a few of them, and that Nick, with his two assistants, could easily cover them all before the time set—two o'clock.

"There is no use in your bothering yourself about this detail work, Conner," said Nick. "Take it easy for the day. Stay here and read, and think over the case if you care to. The lads and I will attend to this matter."

"All right. I would like to run up-town and see my sister, so I'll do that—and be back here at two."

"Good! Just the thing for you. Remember me to Mrs. Baxter, won't you?"

"Sure thing. I've got a big Gladstone bag down-stairs in the hall that I dropped when Joseph let me in, and it is almost full of little odds and ends that I brought to Nora, from the other side."

"By the way, Conner, where does she live now? I have entirely lost track of her?"

"Oh, Dick, her husband, has made a pile in the last few years. They're swell now; bought a big house in Eighty-third Street, over near Riverside Drive, I believe. I'll take the bag right along with me. It's the easiest way to carry the things for Nora."

"All right. Only be sure that you bring it back with you. I'm not going to let you get away from me now that you are here."

"Do you suppose I would stay in that swell house, with butlers and flunkeys standing around and watching every move you make? None for mine, Nick."

And so they parted. And thus the reader is beginning to understand how strangely things came about to play into the hands of the detectives.

Nick had only two hotels on his list; the Hoffman, and the Fifth Avenue, with possibly a look-in at the Albermarle.

But he went first to the Fifth Avenue—and he saw that the first name that was registered there that morning was Thomas Coughlan, Chicago.

He studied the handwriting carefully, but it was so long a time since he had been familiar with Studley's handwriting, that the sight of it offered no suggestion; but, somehow, the mere sight of the name on the register impressed him as significant.

He called one of the clerks to him.

"I would like to send my card to Mr. Coughlan, who arrived this morning," he said.

"I'm sorry," replied the clerk, "but before Mr. Coughlan retired, he gave strict orders that he was not to be disturbed."

"Ah! Indeed. I am sorry. At what hour do you suppose I could see him?"

"He gave directions to be called at seven this evening; but he is to have a barber and also his dinner immediately after that. I should say about eight o'clock."

"I don't suppose you would send up my card against his orders, and leave it to me to——"

"No, sir. I couldn't do that; but if you will come here at seven, I will have it sent up at once—or, at least, the clerk who is on duty then, will do so."

"Thank you. Very well."

"You see, sir," said the clerk apologetically, "Mr. Coughlan came in soon after daylight this morning—so the clerk who roomed him told me. He went off at six. But Mr. Coughlan had been without sleep for two nights, and he especially directed that on no account was he to be disturbed till seven this evening."

"Very good. Very good."

"If you will leave your card, or a message——"

"No. I will drop around this evening."

Nick Carter walked out of the hotel with a strange smile on his face.

"So," he told himself. "Potted you the first time, didn't I? First shot out of the box. Now, if Conner hadn't come, if we had not discussed this case after our old method, if we had not put our heads together and rea-

soned the thing out in a legitimate way, doubling our brains, so to speak, who would ever have connected Thomas Coughlan, of Chicago, with Jasper Ryan?"

He walked slowly back again to his own house, having been absent less than an hour, and seated himself in his study to ponder over what would be best to do now.

Nick doubted very much the wisdom of arresting Ryan at once.

He knew that Ryan would be in a desperate mood, and that he would surely kill somebody before he would submit to arrest; or, he might even kill himself.

But he reasoned that if Ryan were permitted to retain his liberty a while, until the first alertness following upon his escape had worn off, he could be more easily taken.

Again, there was the stolen money.

Nick had not been present at the examination of Ryan at headquarters, but he knew very well that Ryan would never tell where that money was concealed. On the other hand, if he were given his head for a while, there was always the chance that he might somehow betray its hiding-place.

Nick was very glad now that he had not gone to headquarters that morning.

He thought so deeply upon the case, his mind was so concentrated upon it, that time flew on wings, and it did not seem an hour after his return before two o'clock struck, and with it came the arrival of his two assistants —and Conner; so punctual were they that they ascended the front steps together.

"What luck, Chick?" asked Conner, as they entered the house.

"Nothing doing, Conner."

"And you, Patsy?"

"Same here. I found nothing that could fill the bill."

"Has Mr. Carter come in yet, Joseph?" was Conner's next question.

"Yes, sir. He is awaiting you in the study."

So thither the trio went, Conner in the lead, to find Nick as already described—like one waking from sleep.

"Just come in, Conner?" he asked, as they entered the room.

"Yes."

"Where's your grip?"

"By thunder! I clean forgot it, and that's a fact. I was afraid I would be late, and I ran out without it."

"I'll send for it later on," said Nick, smiling. "Well, lads, you didn't have any luck, did you?"

"No."

"I did. I found the man. I know where he is at this moment."

"Je-ru-sa-*lem* the golden!" exclaimed Conner. "Is that straight, Nick?"

"Perfectly."

"Then we reasoned it out correctly."

"Yes. Ryan is now sleeping the sleep of the just, over at the Fifth Avenue, under the name of Thomas Coughlan, of Chicago."

"Who?" Conner fairly shouted the question. Then, with a strange smile on his face, he asked quietly enough: "Say that again, Nick, and say it slow."

"He is registered there as 'Thomas Coughlan, Chicago.'"

"Now I'm wondering, Nick," said Conner, "what particular blessed saint it was that brought me here in time to be with you this day."—(Conner always had a touch of the brogue when he was the least excited. Often it was the only way in which one could tell that he was deeply interested.)

"I'm sure I don't know, Conner," replied Nick, laughing; "but I'd be much obliged to you if you would tell a fellow what it is that you find so exciting about this incident."

"Bless your heart, Nick, don't you know that Tom Coughlan, of Chicago, is me own cousin? He is. He's something of a sport. Follows the races; owns a string of horses and all that. At the present moment, to the best of my knowledge, he's in London. I saw him there the day I sailed, and he said he was going to stay a month or two longer. Now, wouldn't that jar you?"

"What?"

"That Ryan should have taken his name!"

"I suppose it is only a coincidence."

"I suppose so, too; but we'll make it a happy one for our side."

"What's your idea, Conner?"

"Wait a minute till it gets ripe. Tell me yours, about this Ryan."

"What do you mean?"

"Is it your idea to arrest him at once?"

"No. I thought we would try and see if he wouldn't take us to that money he stole."

"That's the ticket. Now I'll tell you *my* idea. The very boldness of it will make it work."

"What is it?"

"Tell me first what you found out about him; I mean about his arrival at the hotel."

"Only that he arrived there early this morning, stated that he had had no sleep for two nights, gave orders that he was not to be disturbed during the day on any account, ordered a call, together with a barber and a waiter at seven, and retired."

"I wish I knew if he knows Tom, and happened to know that he is in Europe. But I don't. We'll have to chance that."

"What are you driving at, Conner?"

"This. I'll go to the hotel this evening, about the time he has finished his dinner. I'll go up to his room unannounced. I'll rap on the door, and when he opens it I'll apologize for the intrusion, but say that I was anxious to make the acquaintance of me namesake."

"It won't work, Con. He'll shoot you."

"Faith, I can shoot as quick as he can, as you well know. But he won't shoot."

"Do you think you can carry it off?"

"Sure. Haven't I the goods on me? And isn't he a fraud?"

"Suppose it should happen that he does know your cousin?"

"Then there'll be a scrap. That's the chance I've got to take. But the likelihood is that his taking the name is only a chance; or he has heard it at the races somewhere, and borrowed it for the occasion."

"But you'll have him cornered. The moment he knows that he is face to face with the real Thomas Coughlan, supposing you to be that person, he will know that he is regarded as a fraud, and will act accordingly."

"I don't think so. Sure, if you looked into the Chicago directory, how many Thomas Coughlans do you suppose you could find? Perhaps not many of them spelt with an A, but plenty of them spelt with an I. They're pronounced the same."

"He'll suspect."

"Leave it to me. Leave it me Irish blarney and me Irish wit. What am I in the secret service for, and with a good record, if I can't fool a duffer like him?"

"I wouldn't wonder if you could bring it off."

"And won't it be fun?"

"Tell me how you will work it, Con."

"Oh, I'll say I was looking over the register for a friend, and saw me own name there. I will give him the idea that I was on a tear, and wondered if I had signed the register myself. Oh, I'll give him a story, for fair."

"And then——"

"What the devil about then? As the Irish alderman said when they wanted to buy a fleet of gondolas for the lake in the park, 'Sure, let's get a pair of them, and let nature take its course.' We'll let events shape themselves after that. But all the same, we must foresee events as far as possible. Get your automobile, Nick, and let's take a ride."

CHAPTER IX.

THE HINDU SCAR.

And thus it was that a little before four o'clock the automobile was brought to the door, and Danny, the chauffeur, was told that his services would not be required that afternoon, and with Conner and Nick in the tonneau and Chick under the wheel with Patsy beside him, the big car started leisurely up the avenue.

They went through the park, then across the bridge, and out Jerome Avenue, always at a slow speed, and all the while discussing the ways and means for the performance of the evening, as Conner called it.

"Don't you think we ought to get back in time so that you can be there at seven o'clock, Mr. Conner?" asked Patsy once, turning half-around in his seat.

"What! And have me make my call upon him the moment he's visible? No, my lad, no. That would spoil it all. And what would I be doing, if I was the real thing, going around inspecting registers when I ought to be at dinner. No, Patsy, he's safe enough where he is till long after eight, or even after ten, I'm thinking. He won't show his nose out of that hotel till after the first bloom of the evening is off the rose, so to speak. However, we'll get back just the same, if you're so minded, Nick, and finish our confab at your house."

"I'll tell you what I think about it, Con," said Nick after a long silence as they were on their way home.

"What is it, Nick?"

"Whatever happens, we must think of some manner in which you can communicate with us without making Ryan suspicious, if you succeed in worming your way into his favor."

"I was thinking of that, too. The telephone is the only way."

"But you must have something to telephone about that he can overhear and not suspect, but also something that we can understand."

"That's not so easy."

"No."

"Say, Nick, I have it—or at least part of it."

"Well, let's hear it."

"It's a cinch that he'll ask me where I'm stopping in town, isn't it?"

"I should think so."

"Sure, and I'll tell him with me sister, Mrs. Baxter, in Eighty-third Street. We'll telephone to her, and put her wise as soon as we get back to your house."

"Well, go on. What next?"

"Why, you or one of the laddies can go up there and wait till you hear from me. I can tell Ryan, if need be, that I'm going home to Chicago at once—to-night, maybe. Nobody can tell now which way the cat is going to jump, but the chances are, since he has got to light out to-night, that it will occur to him to make some sort of use of me—*that is, if he believes me to be the real thing.* The idea of two Thomas Coughlans will appeal to him."

"It would not surprise me if it did."

"I'm thinking that it might go so far as for him to want to travel with me. At least, I believe I can lead him to that way of thinking. If he were a dull or a stupid man, and therefore obstinately suspicious, I wouldn't think of trying it. But the very boldness of it will disarm such a man as he is."

"You have sized him up correctly, Con."

"You see, Nick, you're handicapped in this thing by reason of Ryan's knowing you so well. You couldn't adopt a disguise that he wouldn't see through in a holy minute."

"That's right."

"And with Chick it is the same, isn't it?"

"Precisely."

"But with Patsy, it's different, eh?"

"I don't think he would know Patsy at all."

"Well, you and Chick have got to stand aside and do the thinking and the directing for us, then, while Patsy and I do the real work—that is, if you are intent upon finding that cash."

"That is the whole idea."

"Then why don't you, yourself, go up and spend the evening with my sister? You haven't seen her for a long time, and she said this afternoon that she wished you would call upon her. Dick will be there, and you'll have a pleasant call."

"And then——"

"Why, then, you'd be on hand if I wanted to call up on the phone, and we have worked together so much that if I recited the Greek alphabet to you, you'd know what I meant."

"That's about right, Con."

"And, if I don't call, you wait till I *do* call—sure that's Irish—or till I get there in person, if it's next week. Maybe I can bring him there with me to introduce to my sister, *hey?* How would that be for a star play?"

"Fine."

"And you could keep in the background and enjoy it. By jingo, I'll try it. You put them all wise when you get there."

"Con, you're a great planner. I only hope that half you have planned matures."

"So do I."

"Now I have something to say."

"Well?"

"Since Chick is as useless as I am in the active part of this case, I propose to leave him at the garage when we get back there."

"For why, Nick?"

"Well, it might happen that you would want an automobile—but I forgot. It must be Patsy that I leave."

"Sure."

"You might want an automobile. You can represent to Ryan that you have one here in New York, either your own, or a hired or borrowed one."

"I'm on. Go on."

"All you would have to do would be to call up the garage and order them to send Mr. Coughlan's automobile around to such and such a place. Then Patsy would be your chauffeur. He would take this machine——"

"Maybe Ryan knows it."

"No, he doesn't. Nobody does. It's new."

"Anyhow, it's a good idea. It gives me two strings to me bow. I can telephone to you at my sister's or, if I lose my man and want help, I can call on Patsy, and he can communicate with Chick—— Where'll Chick be all this time, Nick?"

"At the house. We will have to leave him out of it, unless an emergency such as you have suggested should arise."

"That gives me three telephones. Good! Now, would you mind whipping up your horses a bit? I'm getting in a hurry, Nick."

"Let her out a notch or two, Chick," ordered the detective. Then he turned to Conner again.

"We will be home a little before seven, I think," he said. "I think, in order to be on the safe side, I will take Patsy along home with us and disguise him."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea at all."

"Con, did you ever happen to see the Hindu-scar disguise?"

"Can't say I ever did. Never even heard of it. What is it?"

"The most hideous thing you ever saw in the shape of a scarred face. It can only be made across the forehead, and perhaps to cover one eye and a part of one cheek, for a thin piece of rubber has to be stretched and fastened. The rubber is, of course, transparent, and the inside of it is naturally fixed up to represent the salient points of the scar. That is the way I'll fix Patsy. I'll wager you won't want to look at his face twice."

"Can you get him ready in time?"

"I can fix him perfectly in fifteen minutes."

"Good!"

"We will drop Chick at the Twenty-third Street entrance of the Fifth Avenue—Ryan would never go out by either of the other exits, because he would meet too many people. Chick can remain there till you get there in order to see that our bird doesn't fly before his time. I don't anticipate such a thing, but it is as well to be on the safe side."

"Sure."

"Shall you wear anything in the shape of a disguise, Con?"

"Not a thing! Not a blessed thing."

"The only risk you run is that Ryan may have seen or even known your cousin. Remember, he is a sport, too, and may have met him at the track."

"I have thought of that. It's a chance I've got to take."

"It will mean your life or his on the instant."

"Well, I've been up against that sort of thing before. I won't worry about it. It's settled that I make the call?"

"Yes."

"Glory be! but I'm glad that I blew in on you this morning."

"I want you to be careful to-night, Con. Remember, this man is as quick as lightning, as sure as fate, and as relentless as the devil."

"So am I, if anybody should ask you. I leave it to you."

Nick laughed aloud.

"You're inimitable, Con," he said. After a moment, he added:

"We'll go directly to the house, and then I think I'll send Chick to the hotel on foot. You can fix up a bit while I am arranging Patsy's make-up. Then I will send him back with the car to the garage, on the chance that you may want him some time to-night. You will go to the hotel and send Chick home, and I will go to your sister's house. I think we have got it all arranged now."

"Whew, Nick, it sounds like a plot, doesn't it?"

"It has something of that flavor, yes."

A few moments later they arrived in front of the detective's residence.

"Chick," said the detective, "you are to go at once to the hotel and stand at or near the Twenty-third Street entrance."

"All right."

"If Ryan should attempt to leave the place before our plans mature, there will be only one thing to do, and that will be to arrest him. You had best be sure that a copper is near to assist you if you undertake it."

"Suppose he goes out by another door?"

"In that case he will escape us; but he won't. He would have to encounter too many people by either of the other ways."

"Anything further?"

"Yes. Stay there till Conner gets there. Then come home and stay here till further orders. That's all. Patsy, put the plug in your pocket and come inside. I'll tell you what I want you to do while I am fixing you."

"I am in on it, then, am I?"

"I don't know whether you are or not. Chance must determine that. But if Mr. Conner can induce our friend at the hotel to make use of an automobile, you will be very much in on it, I think."

"What am I to be in that case? Chauffeur?"

"Yes; and a very hideous one at that."

"What, the Hindu scar?"

"That same, as Mr. Conner would say, under excitement. Come on, Con, and I'll let you see me adjust it."

CHAPTER X.

JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

When Conner arrived at the hotel and found Chick awaiting him, the latter, of course, informed him that nothing had happened. It was then a quarter to eight.

"I've been thinking, Chick," said Conner, "that I don't want you to go directly home, notwithstanding Nick's orders."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Go up to the Albany. Wait there. Telephone to Nick that you are there instead of at home, and tell him that it is at my request."

"All right. What am I to do there?"

"I'll tell you in a minute. Nick is at my sister's, in Eighty-third Street—Mrs. Baxter's—Richard B. Baxter. You'll have to look in the book for the telephone number, for I don't remember it."

"Very good, Conner. What then?"

"Wait there till you hear from Nick or from me. Keep near the telephone, or at least tell somebody that you are expecting a call. Take my name. Call yourself Mr. Conner."

"That's a compliment."

"Sure it is. I don't lend it to everybody."

"Would you mind telling me what the idea is?"

"Not at all. In the character of my cousin, I'm pretty much of a sport. Now, if the occasion *should* arise whereby I wish to leave town suddenly, it would look mighty strange to the chap up-stairs if I didn't want to leave word with *somebody*. He'd think it mighty queer."

"I confess, I had not thought of that."

"Men don't go off helter-skelter in that way, and leave word with nobody. It would make him suspicious instantly. But if we should hit up some sort of a trip together, and I should make it a point that I must leave word somewhere—why, there you are."

"I understand."

"I'm betting you a red apple, Chick, that Ryan don't move a leg out of this house before ten, and I'll bet you one to two that he doesn't go before eleven."

"I think myself that it will be late before he will make the attempt. Nick is so cocksure that he won't attempt a disguise, that I shouldn't think he'd attempt it before midnight."

"Tut, tut, Chick! What are you thinking of?"

"What do you mean?"

"This: It would be dangerous for him to go now, and it would be worse for him to go at midnight, or after, for then the streets are half-deserted, and coppers would be on the watch. But take it between half-past ten and eleven, when the theaters are giving up their crowds, and Mr. Copper has got all he can attend to. That would be the safest time for him—between ten-thirty and eleven."

"I think it would."

"Well, skip along now, Chick, and I'll go inside."

Conner walked to the desk, and looked over the register for that day.

He smiled when he saw the supposed signature of his Chicago cousin, but he also took a mental note of the number of the room, and presently he took the elevator to that floor.

Then he strolled aimlessly through the corridor until he passed that particular door.

He noted two things then: He could smell cigar smoke coming from that room, and also he could hear that somebody was talking over a telephone; at least, that is the way it sounded to him.

He could not have heard what was said, even had he listened, which he did not do; but he was satisfied that his man was still in his room, and that was all he wished to know. He returned to the office floor and seated himself on one of the settees.

Fifteen minutes later he was startled by hearing his own name called along the corridor.

"Mis-ter Con-ner, Mister *Con*-ner!" called the boy.

"Here, boy," he said. "I am Mr. Conner. What is wanted?"

"You are wanted at the telephone," was the rather unexpected reply; and Conner hastened to discover if it were really he who was wanted.

He speedily discovered that there was no doubt of it, for it was Patsy at the other end of the wire.

"That you, Mr. Conner?" Patsy inquired. "Do you knew Mr. Coughlan? I want to make sure. Your voice isn't quite distinct."

"Good, Patsy. I know two of them."

"All right. Well, one of them has just ordered an automobile from this place."

"You don't say!"

"I do. He wants a big, powerful car, limousine-body, and all that, with the best chauffeur in the place. He wants it for a week and perhaps more. Catch on?"

"I certainly do."

"Well, the manager is Mr. Grafton. He says he knows you. He says he will give me the job if you say so. I tried to get the chief at the house, but I couldn't."

"He's up at my sister's, Patsy. You can get him later, and tell him all about it. Now, let the manager speak to me, and then I want you again. Hello, Grafton? Are you the Grafton who used to be in Washington?"

"Yes, Mr. Conner. How are you?"

"Fine. I'll come in and see you in a day or two. Now, by all means give that lad the job. Mr. Carter would insist upon it. It is one of his cases."

"What about the machine? The man wants an eight-thousand-dollar machine. It's worth ten at that."

"I'll be personally responsible for the car, and so will Mr. Carter. Give him the best you've got in the place. I will probably be a passenger with him, although I am not sure of that. In any case, I won't be far behind him."

"Very good, Mr. Conner."

"Now let Patsy come to the phone again. Hello, Pat."

"Yes, sir."

"What time is that machine ordered?"

"Ten-thirty, at the Twenty-third Street entrance."

"You are to drive it; that's settled. Now, listen."

"Yes."

"Have Nick's car ready for me in case I am not a passenger with your man; see?"

"Yes."

"Get one of the chauffeurs in the place to run it down here, and wait at the Twenty-fourth Street entrance. If I do not claim it by a quarter to eleven, he can drive it back to the garage. But I hope to be one of your passengers. You want a name ready, Patsy."

"I'll have one by the time it's asked for."

"Good boy! Have Grafton rig you out in the best he's got."

"All right."

"Now call up Nick, and tell him all about it. Tell him that I suggest that this news does not alter in the least any of the arrangements we have already made. Will you do that?"

"Yes."

"When you have done that, call up Mr. Conner, at the Albany Hotel. It will be Chick."

"Yes."

"Tell him the same thing—only tell him not to expect a telephone, but rather to look for me to drop in on him for a moment. If he could be seated somewhere in the café, it would suit me."

"I'll attend to it."

"That will be about all, I guess. So-long."

Conner left the booth, and there was exultation in his soul as he stepped out of it, mopping his brow.

"I never saw anything work so nicely in all my life," he muttered to himself as he went over to the cigar-stand and treated himself to one of the best. "Ten-thirty, eh? Gee! I've got loads of time. I think I'll have a bite to eat. I forgot that I was hungry."

It did not take him long to satisfy his appetite, and when that was done he went again to the telephone-booth and called up the number of his sister's house.

"Hello, sis," he said to her. "This is Con. Tell Nick I want to speak to him a moment."

"Hello, Conner," called Nick. "Anything new?"

"Only what Patsy has probably already told you; but I have been thinking that I haven't a doubt that I can induce Ryan to go in and meet my sister for a moment. It will strengthen my position, if once I can get him to the point of asking me to be a passenger with him, and I think I can."

"Well?"

"She doesn't like this sort of thing any too well, so it is up to you to arrange it with her. She must not forget to call me Tom—nor must Dick, if he is there."

"He isn't here to-night, so that is all right."

"So much the better. I can depend on Nora, if she sets her mind to a thing. She would have been as good at this business as I am—or better, if she had been a man. You think the call a good idea, don't you?"

"Yes—if you can get him here."

"I'll use it as a bait if I can't prevail upon him to invite me to accompany him in any other way; but my game will be not to mention the fact that I have a sister, until the last moment. One shouldn't give a chap like Ryan too much all at once, as the baby said."

"Right you are."

"Nick, isn't it a beautiful case?"

"Well, so far it has worked out rather wonderfully. It is nine-twenty now. When are you going to make that call?"

"I am going up this minute. Good-by."

He went to the cigar-stand a second time, and filled his pockets with cigars. Then he purchased a flask of brandy, for emergency, in case there should be any trouble

of any kind. Then he went to the elevator and ascended to the floor on which the room occupied by Ryan was located.

"It all depends upon whether Ryan has ever seen my cousin or not," he muttered. "If he has, the broth is in the fire. If he has not, then, by thunder, I'll make good."

He passed along the hallway to a point near the door, and then stopped to listen.

He could hear nothing, although he could see that a light was there, and he had no doubt that the man inside was planning, planning, planning how he was to escape the officers of the law who would be searching for him by this time throughout the entire country.

Fancy yourself in that man's place.

In all the length and breadth of the land, not one friend to whom he could appeal to hide him away until the fury should be past.

And he, himself, at that moment, in a room in one of the leading hotels of the city in the very center of population, surrounded by policemen, all of whom had by this time been ordered to be on the lookout for him.

Conner shrugged his shoulders as he thought of it, and he muttered:

"It is better, after all, to be inside the law than outside it. I wonder what the next two minutes is going to determine? Does it mean that one of us two will be a dead man within that time, or does it mean that I can bluff it through?"

He waited still another moment, and then, after backing off a little way, he strode boldly forward and rapped upon the door, with what effect we already know.

He noticed the interval of silence after his summons, and he understood it; then he heard the voice say:

"Come in."

CHAPTER XI.

RYAN MAKES A MOVE.

We already know what happened after Conner's entrance, and we have only to look in upon two of the scenes, where before we stood outside, and then to accompany the big Packard car with its occupants, and its scar-faced chauffeur.

The first of the two scenes referred to is, of course, that one at the garage where Conner secured the bill of sale of the automobile in the name of Thomas Coughlan.

When he entered the garage, Grafton, the manager, saw him approaching and started forward eagerly to shake his hand, for Conner and he were old friends in Washington; but Conner held up a warning finger toward him, and approaching somewhat haughtily, demanded to know what the rental of the big machine would be by the week, etc.

In that manner he took the man back to his own private office, where, in as few words as possible, he explained what he wanted.

As we know, the bill of sale was secured, Conner merely making a deposit of fifteen hundred dollars; and that fifteen hundred, it will be remembered, he got from Ryan. A bit of sharp practise, perhaps, but entirely excusable under the circumstances, since it was destined to be some time returned to him, or, rather, to the owners of the money, less the rental of the machine. But Conner's point was that he wished to "cut a swathe" with Ryan.

Thence to the Albany Hotel, where he dashed inside the café, found Chick seated at one of the tables, rushed up to him, and whispered:

"Telephone Nick, at my sister's house, that we are now on our way there and should be there in about twenty minutes. Ryan is with me. I don't know whether he will enter the house or not. I haven't suggested it as yet. You had better wait here for further orders from there."

Then he dashed out again and reentered the car, as we know, and Patsy, or Allan Gwynn, as he was supposed to be, at once drove the car toward Eighty-third Street.

"Well, cousin Tom, how do you like it so far?" Conner asked of his companion, as they started forward.

"D'ye know, old chap, I hadn't thought much about it," replied Ryan. "I suppose we are after that grip of yours now, eh?"

"Precisely."

"Odd place for a chap to stop, isn't it? Way up there in Ninety-third Street."

"Eighty-third, Tom."

"Aw, yes. To be sure."

"My sister lives there. She is Mrs. Baxter. Mrs. Richard Baxter. They live in great style, too. Say, old fellow, suppose you come into the house with me for a few moments, and let me present you to her as our long-lost brother. Eh? What do you say?"

Ryan shrugged his shoulders.

"Beastly bore, you know, begging her pardon and

yours. Really, old chap, I'm getting deuced anxious to get out of town."

"Oh, well, I won't urge you, of course, if you don't care to do it; but I *would* like to see the expression of her face when I introduced you."

"If you'll promise not to detain me——"

"Detain you? We won't stay there five minutes."

"Well, I'll think about it."

"You'll have to think quick, then, for we are almost there."

They rode on in silence after that until presently the car wheeled around a corner and drew up swiftly to the curb. Patsy jumped down and opened the door and said:

"You told me you would tell me which house. I hope I am near it, sir."

"Yes," said Conner. "It is two doors beyond, but you may wait here. Are you coming in with me, cousin?" he added, turning to Ryan.

"On second thought, I think I'd rather not, if you'll excuse me, old chap," drawled Ryan. "I'll wait here with the chauffeur. My regards to your sister, and say that on another trip I should be delighted, dontcherknow. But this unceremonious method of making her acquaintance—really, I would feel quite out of place."

"Well," said Conner, "you certainly don't belong to our branch of the Coughlans, or you wouldn't stand on ceremony. But I won't urge you. I know how you feel about it. Are you willing to wait a few minutes?"

"Yaas—twenty. Pray don't make it more than that."

And so Conner, much to his chagrin, was forced to enter the house alone.

"He is too shy, Nick," he told the detective, as soon as he was inside the house. "I don't blame him. In his position I certainly would not run unnecessary risks. He said I could have twenty minutes. Where is my grip, Nora? I want to have it ready."

"It is in the front hall."

"Tell us about it," said Nick.

"There isn't time only for the outlines, and you already know them."

"Do you think he has any suspicion of you?"

"If you had asked me that question twenty minutes ago, I should have answered, 'none at all,' but at the present moment I am feeling a little uneasy."

"Do you mean because he wouldn't come into this house?"

"Partly that, and partly his manner when he refused. By the way, have you told Nora his real name? She never reads the papers, and I don't believe she has connected Ryan with the man he really is. Have you told her his real name?"

"No. Why?"

"Well, it has just occurred to me that Dick might have known him somewhere, and therefore Nora might also. Or she might have met him out somewhere. He always went in good society, didn't he?"

"The very best."

"What in the world are you two talking about?" demanded Mrs. Baxter. "Who is this man who is out there if his name is not Ryan?"

"He is—or rather, once was an old friend of mine," replied Nick. "He is known all over town as Billy Studley."

"*Bill*-ee *Stud-lee?* I should say I do know him. He is one of Dick's friends."

Without waiting for another word Nick and Conner, at the same instant, made a leap toward the front door.

Nick reached it first, and threw it open, and Conner and he dashed out upon the front steps together.

Then they stopped and looked blankly at each other.

There was not an automobile in sight anywhere in the street. Jasper Ryan had taken the alarm and had made off, and there was no way of telling in what direction he had gone.

"Anyway," exclaimed Conner, "Patsy is the chauffeur."

"Yes," said Nick grimly, "and you can bet your life that at this moment Ryan is sitting next to Patsy, and that he has the muzzle of a pistol under Patsy's arm, and is telling him that if he don't obey every order that is given, he will kill him. He'll do it, too. I know him."

"I botched the whole thing by introducing the sister business, didn't I?"

"I'm very much afraid you did."

"What is to be done now?"

"Nothing. We might as well go into the house and get our breath somehow. The only thing that we can do now is to wait until we hear from Patsy—if we ever do. Oh, yes; but we will. Ryan won't hurt Patsy unless Patsy forces him to do it. I had forgotten that letter."

"Anyhow, I'll call up Chick and tell him about it," said Conner."

"Do so."

"Ask him to come up here where you can all talk it over together," suggested Mrs. Baxter.

Nick nodded, and Conner went to the phone, asked for the number at the Albany, got it, and said:

"There is a Mr. Conner seated in the café, I think. Will you ask him to come to the telephone, please?"

Conner could hear the young woman at the hotel office laugh; then she replied:

"Are you at a house in Eighty-third Street?"

"Yes," replied Conner.

"Well, the Mr. Conner who was here came to me just exactly half an hour ago, and told me to say to any person who called him from Eighty-third Street, that he had an idea of his own which he was going to carry out, orders or no orders. That is the message. I wrote it down, and have repeated it to you exactly as he said it."

"Thank you," said Conner; and he hung up the receiver.

"What was all that?" asked Nick.

Conner repeated what he had been told, and he was astonished beyond measure when Nick clapped his hands together, and exclaimed:

"Bully! Bully for Chick!"

"Now what the devil do you mean by that?" demanded Conner.

"I mean that this time Chick was wiser than both of us put together."

"I don't quite read the riddle, but I suppose there is an answer."

"You bet there is, and a good one, too."

"Would you mind giving a fellow a chance at it?"

"Well, Chick had just about made up his mind that this case was going altogether too easy to be real. He knows Ryan almost as well as I do, and he knows that you can't fool him very much."

"Go on, Nick. I haven't caught on yet."

"Why—wait. Let me have that telephone a moment," and he stepped to the transmitter and called up the garage.

"Hello," he said presently. "Is that you, Grafton?"

"Yes."

"Well, this is Carter. Is my car in the garage, because——"

"No; it went out about an hour ago. Your chauffeur, Danny, took it."

"Oh! That's all right. Thank you."

"My automobile left the garage an hour ago in charge of Danny," he explained, "which means that Chick ordered it around to the Albany before you got there, Conner. He meant to be ready and he was ready, and it's a thousand to one that when you trailed up the streets with Ryan, in the Packard, Chick wasn't a block behind you, in my car. And there you are."

"Well," said Conner, sitting down hard, and uttering a deep sigh, "I think I will now join with you in that remark you made a moment ago. You said 'Bully for Chick!' So do I, with all my heart."

"The moment you left him in the café at the Albany, he ran out the side door, jumped into our car, and followed—and it's a thousand to one that he is following now."

"It is big odds, too, isn't it," said Conner, "that he or Patsy will get a bullet in him before morning?"

"Oh, I don't know. They are both pretty well able to take care of themselves."

"What is the next move, Nick?"

"If Mrs. Baxter isn't tired, I think we will sit here for another hour or so. We are likely to hear something, I imagine. Chick has got his back up this time."

"Stay here till morning if you will," said Conner's sister. "I am only too delighted to have you, and I should consider it an affront if you went away now and left me hanging in the sky with curiosity. What do you suppose Chick will do, Mr. Carter?"

"I don't know. He has taken the bit in his teeth, and it is more than likely that he will bring Ryan in, a prisoner, or that an undertaker will bring Chick in; and no undertaker has ever done it yet."

CHAPTER XII.

AN AUTOMOBILE DUEL.

Nick Carter read the circumstances very nearly correct.

Chick had made up his mind that things were going altogether too smoothly to last, knowing Studley as he did, and he resolved that he was not going to remain at the Albany as a useless member of the bunch; he decided to do something himself.

Very soon after Conner telephoned to him from the Fifth Avenue, Chick called up the garage and got Danny on the telephone.

Then he said to him:

"Danny, I have some orders to give you, and I want you to follow them out to the letter."

"All right, sir," was Danny's reply, for he was devoted to Chick.

"Get the car out of the garage, away from other orders, as soon as you can after you leave the telephone now."

"Yes, sir."

"Drive it over to the Albany and take your stand near the curb, facing toward Broadway, and as close to Broadway as the cops will let you stand."

"All right, sir."

"Then watch for that big Packard that Patsy is going to drive. You know the car?"

"You bet I do."

"When you get here, watch for it. Keep your engine going, and be ready to move on the instant."

"Yes, sir."

"So that when I rush out of the café here, and jump in beside you, I won't have to say a word. You are just to follow that car. Patsy won't mind, of course, if he is followed, and the passengers inside the limousine won't know it, so you can keep rather close."

"All right."

"Only be careful when the Packard stops. It will go to Eighty-third Street near the Drive, I think, although that is by no means sure. Be careful now, and get the car out as quickly as you can."

Afterward, when Conner rushed into the café at the Albany, and held that short one-sided conversation with Chick, he had hardly got outside the front door of the hotel before Chick left it by the side door, and as a matter of fact Danny started the chase within ten seconds after Patsy started his car.

Chick was seated beside him on the front seat, giving directions, and they were careful to keep just far enough behind so that there was no appearance of trailing, but nevertheless they were close enough not to lose sight of the other car.

When the Packard turned into Eighty-third Street, Chick, with his car, did the same, although he turned in the opposite direction, and stopped against a curb at the other side of the avenue.

Chick stepped out and stood watching.

The electric lights permitted him to see Conner descend; he saw him stop and appear to parley for a moment with his companion, and then enter the house alone.

"Now, Danny," he said, "be ready!"

It seemed as if the door of the house had hardly closed behind Conner before the man inside the Packard jumped out, and straightway mounted to the front seat beside Patsy.

There was perhaps half a moment of delay after that when the Packard started forward and turned around in the street, to go up or down the Drive.

"Now, Danny!" exclaimed Chick, leaping in beside him. "Turn around and follow them. Get abreast of Patsy if you can. That car isn't any faster than this one. That's right. Now slide out from under that wheel and let me have it."

It isn't an easy matter to change places under such circumstances, but they did it, and presently the two cars were skimming along side by side up the Drive, going faster than the law allowed, perhaps, but yet keeping close to it, for Ryan had no wish to be held up by a bicycle policeman.

And right here was where Chick's fine work came in. He began to crowd the other car.

Just a little at first, then more and more, until at last Ryan called out angrily to him:

"Look out there, you fool! Are you drunk? Can't you see that you are crowding? There is plenty of room on the other side of you."

Chick did not reply. He only crowded the more. He knew that Ryan had his hands full in keeping Patsy to his duty, for if once Ryan took the muzzle of that pistol away from Patsy's side, Patsy would act himself.

"Sing, Danny!" said Chick. "Patsy will know your voice, and it will tell him who we are."

And Danny raised his voice in song, exactly as if he had taken too much for his good, whereupon a sharp oath came from Ryan.

Chick, who was watching him narrowly, saw him slip his left hand into the pocket of his coat, and he instantly knew that Ryan meant to draw a second pistol, and to use it, too.

He realized that the time had come to act. It was now or never.

At the risk of totally wrecking both machines, and killing all four of them, he gave the wheel a sharp turn, and at the same instant put on more speed.

The big car leaped forward as if it had been kicked.

It locked horns, so to speak, with the Packard, and as its momentum was greater, it knocked the left forward wheel around exactly as if Patsy had turned his steering-

wheel, and the two machines shot toward the curb together.

Both cars were nearly overturned.

Chick shut off his power the instant he made the collision, and as he did so, he jumped clear over the hood to the ground almost directly beside Ryan.

He fancied that he saw Patsy jump from the other car at the same instant.

He saw Ryan start to his feet with a curse, and saw him fire one of his pistols toward Patsy—and then he reached him.

As he came to Ryan's side, within reach of him, he leaped up and struck a straight, upward blow with all his strength, aiming at Ryan's jugular-vein; and as he struck—just as the impact of his fist against Ryan's throat was manifest, Ryan fired the second shot, full into Chick's face, it seemed, and Chick went down in a heap on the pavement.

But so did Ryan.

That blow had been well aimed, and well delivered, and it had taken all the life out of the escaping criminal.

It is probable that he would have recovered in a second or two, and have been able still to put up a good fight, but by this time Patsy was on deck again, and Danny was also ready; and Patsy, having seen Chick go down before the shot, seized one of the pistols from Ryan's hand and struck him a savage blow on the head with it, so that Ryan wilted like a wet cloth.

"I hope I killed him," said Patsy, whose temper was up. "Look after him, Danny, and find something to tie him with. Pitch him inside the limousine as soon as you can. There'll be inquiries about those shots, I'm thinking. Deny them, if the coppers come. Tell them the shots were over there somewhere."

All the time he was talking he was giving his attention to Chick who had opened his eyes now, and who, with Patsy's aid, was slowly struggling to his feet.

"It's in my left shoulder, Patsy," he said. "I'm better now. There is some brandy in the tool-box. Give me a swallow of that. Don't think about the wound. I can stand it. But, for Heaven's sake, see if these cars will move. If they will, let's get out of this as soon as possible."

Patsy ran for the brandy, and handed it to Chick, who took it with his right hand and swallowed some of it.

Then Danny reappeared from the limousine-body.

"Sure, I've got him tied all right," he said, "but it's me that's thinking he needs no tying. If he ain't got a cracked skull, I'm a Dutchman instead of an Irishman."

Patsy cranked the Packard, and found it would work all right, and now he called out to Danny to try the other car. The engine started at once.

"Run the chief's car to the garage, Danny," he called out. "We'll take care of this one."

It was wonderful that during all this excitement—the whole thing did not last five minutes—not one bit of attention was attracted toward them. Nobody spoke to them, and no officer seemed to have heard the shots or to have noticed them if he did. Such a thing could not have happened more than once in a lifetime, along that place.

"How are you feeling, Chick?" asked Patsy, as he got under the wheel.

"A trifle poorly, thank you; but I'll be all right. It's only a slight wound. I know that much, so don't worry. Drive the car straight to Mrs. Baxter's, Pat."

"That's where I'm going. I only hope that Danny tied that Ryan up good and strong. Keep an eye on the doors, Chick."

* * * * * * *

Nick Carter and Conner had waited less than an hour when there was a ring at the door-bell.

"I wonder who that can be at this time of night," said Mrs. Baxter.

"Go and see, Nora," exclaimed her brother; and then he added hastily: "Excuse me; I clean forgot that the house is full of people to answer door-bells."

A moment later the library door was thrown open, and Chick, pale, but triumphant, stood tottering on the threshold.

"We've got him, Nick!" he exclaimed. "He's outside in the Packard. I've got a bullet in my left shoulder somewhere, but it is only a slight wound. If Mrs. Baxter will give me a swallow of brandy and you will tie up the wound, Nick, I'll be all right in a jiffy. Don't worry about Ryan. Danny tied him with the tug-rope, and Patsy is out there with him now."

"Faith, Chick!" exclaimed Conner, "you're a better man than both of us, this night, so ye are!"

THE END.

The next number (579) will contain "Jasper Ryan's Counter-move; or, Patsy's Remarkable Contract."

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TALKS WITH OUR READERS.

There is one of the subtropical varieties of the pitcher-plant family which catches and eats rats. The poor rodent is not devoured at once, but held between the jawlike leaves of the curious plant until it dies of exhaustion. The gradual absorption of the rat follows. At the back of the animal's head is a sharp, incurved spike, designed to prick the back of any creature that comes to drink from the pitcher, or cup-shaped leaf, that gives the plant its name. There is a curious resemblance between this spike and the fang of the rattlesnake, and it is commonly believed that the liquid contained in the pitcher stupefies any animal which drinks of it, thus allowing the plant to digest or absorb the remains at leisure. The young pitcher-plant has a rosette of half-prostrate leaves with a terminal, hooked crest, overhanging a slightly hollowed lower portion. After a while a stem shoots up, bearing other leaves, which are broad and spatulate in form, ending in a cylindrical tendril that twists around adjacent branches, and develops terminally into a large cavity, or pitcher. As the tendrils gradually lift the stem over the pool, there eventually hang dozens or even scores of pitchers, varying in size from two inches to a foot or more.

Nick Carter, whose business it is to keep posted upon all the new tricks of the criminal profession, has recently given to a reporter the result of his observation concerning a clever dodge practised by New York shoplifters last winter.

"Incredible as it may seem," said the detective, "there are many shoplifters who steal by the agency of the onion. These men, before setting out upon their contemplated crimes, eat of raw onions abundantly. Then they stroll into the silversmith's or the haberdasher's or the jeweler's that they propose to rob.

"'Show me those large solitaires surrounded with pigeon-blood rubies, please,' says the jewel thief.

"The clerk brings forth the tray of gems, and, bending over it, the thief sighs with admiration. His face close to the clerk's, he sighs again. And the clerk's nostrils quiver, and he turns away his head. The inspection of the diamonds continues for some minutes. Throughout it the thief keeps breathing hard, the clerk keeps turning his head away, and hence it is no wonder, at the day's end, that a couple of costly rings are missing."

A beast more ferocious, more fiendish, or one less likely to be tamed than the Tasmanian "devil," is not to be found. "Devil" is the terse and appropriate name by which it is known. The "devil" is about the size of a large bulldog. Its head is one-third the length of its body, and is flat, broad, and hideous. Its feet resemble those of the badger, with big claws, while its tail sticks out stiffly. Its coat looks like wool rubbed the wrong way, and the general appearance of the beast is of a kind that makes avoidance appear the wisest policy.

The creature becomes a veritable fiend when disturbed ever so slightly. He attacks everything before him, dead or living, and in his mad rage flies at a mastiff or a door with equal ferocity. He always fights to the finish, knowing neither truce nor quarter. So long as there is a shred of flesh to tear or a bone to shatter, he clings to his foe, and, unmindful of the injury he may receive, he plies his powerful jaws until his strength fails.

A "devil" that was captured when quite young and kept solely as a curiosity, never changed a bit when in captivity. He was surly and ferocious throughout, and ultimately killed himself in a mad struggle with the bars of his cage. He has been known to rush at a solid stone wall in a paroxysm of fury, uttering growls and barks and beating the air the while.

On the west coast of Africa, just north of Liberia, a great many traces yet exist of the large establishments maintained by Pedro Blanco, when he was making his enormous fortune in the slave-trade sixty years ago. Of the hundreds of men who for three centuries were engaged in the African slave-trade, this Spaniard towered above them all in the extent and success of his operations. He was a man of good family, well educated, and embarked in his disreputable business because he saw in it the prospects of a great fortune.

At first he commanded a slave-ship running from West Africa to the West Indies, where he sold his slaves. After a few years, he established himself in Africa, at the mouth of the Gallinas River, for the purpose of accumulating the cargoes there, which his fleet of slave-vessels was to carry to all parts of the West Indies and the South American coast.

To avoid being surprised by cruisers, which were constantly on the alert to capture slaving vessels, he erected watch-towers at intervals along the coast, in which watchmen, provided with powerful spy-glasses, were stationed. Upon the appearance in the offing of a hostile sail, the news was telegraphed by signals in a few minutes from the coast for miles into the interior, and Pedro Blanco and his agents were instantly informed that there was danger in the air, and hastened to conceal all traces of their occupation. If the vessel sent a few boat-loads of men ashore, they found

nothing in sheds except bales of harmless merchandise, the slaves having been concealed in the jungle.

Upon one of the many islands that dot the river, Blanco had his headquarters, but he resided miles up the river upon another island, where, for a long time, his sister shared with him the business cares. There he lived in all the luxury of a semibarbaric prince. Farther up the river, on another island, was his seraglio, in which were his wives, who, after the custom of the tribes in that neighborhood, had each a separate dwelling. He received with bounteous hospitality every white man who came his way. When he finally gave up the business and retired to Havana, he had amassed a fortune of several millions. This famous slave-dealer was known for a long time as the Rothschild of West Africa, and his paper was current and accepted in the money-marts of Europe.

A lion-tamer's power lies not only in his courage and self-possession, but in his understanding the temper of the animals. It is perilous for any one but the tamer himself to attempt any liberties with them, however indifferent and well-disposed they may seem.

A noted lion-tamer was sitting at the entrance to the menagerie, and the entertainment was about to begin, when he heard a piercing cry. This was followed by a furious roaring, and cries of "Help, help!" by many voices. He rushed in, and this is an account of what happened:

All eyes were turned toward one of the cages. It was appalling. A poor fellow, one of the employees, had been lifted from the ground, and was suspended outside the cage in the claws of four lions, one of which was eating his arms. One glimpse of that horrible sight, and the lion-tamer ran, reflecting in a second that to go round by the cages and get in by the ordinary entrance would involve a fatal delay, and so he decided on the desperate expedient of raising the grating on the side toward the spectators and so crawling into the cage.

How he did it, how it happened that he was not caught and mangled, he never knew. But suddenly he was on his feet in the midst of that savage feast, with neither stick nor whip, and only his fists for weapons. He struck and commanded. The lions fell back, and let fall their prey. He hurried out of the cage, and was greeted with enthusiastic applause. He thought the poor fellow was dead; but he was taken to the hospital, his wounds were dressed, and he recovered. Then he asked the employee how it happened. He said:

"When I passed those gentlemen"—he always spoke courteously of the lions—"I wished to caress them. Three were asleep, and one was awake; that one misunderstood my attention. He waked his comrades, seized me, and but for you I should certainly have made a meal for them."

The heroic lion-tamer goes on to relate that the king, being informed of his act, decorated him publicly, and the people fêted him and loaded him with honors. On this occasion, he says, though he was not used to being afraid, he was so agitated that his limbs shook; he was faint, and could hardly see. He soon recovered himself, however, and his pleasure in this public recognition of his bravery was marred only by a regret that his father could not be there to enjoy it.

THE LIFE-RAFT.

BY CLEW GARNET.

A few years ago I was in command of the brig *Haidee*, a Baltimore clipper—a long, low, black, raking craft, that looked at a first glance more like an ideal pirate than the peaceful merchantman she really was. We had taken a general cargo and passengers to Savannah, Ga., and thence took in a cargo of rice and a new lot of passengers for Havana, Cuba.

After leaving Savannah we ran free down the Florida coast, until near Cape Canaveral, with a nice northeaster to fill our canvas, keeping well inside the Gulf Stream, out of its strong current, and in sight of land all the time.

With a full crew—two mates and sixteen men, cook and steward, and two cabin-boys, to which were added twelve cabin passengers—we had little room to spare when all hands were on deck, for the brig was only three hundred tons measurement, and as sharp as a wedge fore and aft.

We had just sighted the pitch of Cape Canaveral on our starboard bow, when the northeaster that had served us long and well began to fail, and I saw with dislike and some misgivings a dirty-looking bank of clouds in the southwest. I went below, and my barometer there told me a change for the worse was close at hand.

"If it only holds off till we can round Cape Florida, and run inside the Florida reefs, I'll be thankful," was my remark to Mr. Bishop, my first mate, as I called his attention to what was brewing, and told him to look well to stays, braces, standing rigging, etc., before the gale broke in upon us.

Mr. Booth, our second mate, had the watch. He was small, but the strength of a giant was in that slender form, and his heart was big enough for a giant ten times his size and weight. He put all hands to work to get an extra pull on the backstays, saw that spare spars and boats were well secured, and before his watch was out reported all snug for what might come, below or aloft.

We had then passed the cape, and were slipping along toward Key Biscayne, or Cape Florida, at a fair rate for so light a breeze, carrying all the canvas we could spread, but ready to shorten in at a minute's warning if the wind came out ahead fresh, as it threatened.

The passengers, four of whom were ladies—mother and three daughters—the rest gentlemen, had not been alarmed, for they knew so little of sea-life that our busy work was not noticed by them as extraordinary.

But when I saw the crisis close at hand, a change of wind, and a sharp one, evidently, the husband of the lady spoken of saw me take the trumpet from the mate, and heard me tell him to call all hands to stand by to shorten sail.

Then he approached and asked me if there was any danger. My answer was:

"None at all, sir, in a craft well found and stanch as

this; but we are about to have a change of wind, and, perhaps, a rough sea with it. Your wife and daughters will be more comfortable below while we are so busy about decks, as we will be when we shorten sail to meet the weather."

"All right, sir—we'll go to the cabin when we are in the way," was his cheerful answer.

The change came even sooner than I expected. Ten minutes after I took the trumpet the wind died away into a dead calm, while away far along the gulf I saw the black, ragged storm-clouds rising swiftly.

Without a second's delay I had the flying jib, royals, and staysails hauled down, clewed up, and furled. Then topgallantsails were furled, and everything got ready for reefing topsails. The courses were next taken in, and under the spencer, jib and two topsails we waited to feel the touch of the southwester.

We had got snug not a minute too soon. I had just put a second man at the wheel, when I saw, a mile or so ahead, a wall of white foam lifted by the strong-breathed gale that was coming down upon us.

"Lower away both topsails on the caps, haul out the reef-tackles, stand by sheets and braces, and brail up the spencer," I shouted.

While these orders were being obeyed, I turned to the passengers, and told them if they did not want to be drenched with spray they must go into the cabin at once.

Every hatch was fast, only the cabin companionway open, and all ready for it.

"Hard up your helm!" was my next order, and as it was spoken the gale was on us.

It nearly took us aback, but the mate, Mr. Booth, had charge forward, and he had the foreyard and staysail over to windward in a second, knowing his duty, for he could hear no order, and the bows veered off while our lee-rail went down to the water fairly under the pressure, and then we shot away before a tempest that made everything crack and snap aloft, while below we were literally almost hidden in the short, white, heaving surges of the sea.

Anxiously I waited for a lull, so that I could reef down close and haul up on our course; but, instead, it came harder and harder, and I had, at last, to give the order to clew up and furl, so as to try and come to under the reefed spencer and fore storm-staysail.

It was a terrible job to get those sails in. Both mates and the best men were aloft an hour ere it was done, and it was dark when they came down, and in the worst cross-sea I ever saw we got her head to the wind with only two close-reefed fore-and-aft sails on to steady her. Ten minutes later, when we were getting ready to lower our upper yards and house royal-masts, down came everything above the topmast crosstrees, carried away in ragged, unmitigated wreck. Our decks were all awash now, and a tremulous sea took the starboard-quarter boat and my own gig in the waist clear out in the davits—both wrecked beyond hope.

And now, while utter darkness enveloped us, the gale increasing, if possible, the sea literally rolling "mountains high," a passenger from below crept up to say the ladies were almost wild with fear.

I was in the act of shouting to him, so he could hear in that mad turmoil of wind and water, to go back and tell them there was no danger, when a yell from forward reached my ear.

"Sail ho! Close aboard!"

I saw nothing—but the next instant there was a terrible shock, a collision, and for a second we had a glimpse of a hull and spars alongside, and then all was gone in the darkness.

"Sound the pump well, and be quick about it!" was my order to Mr. Bishop.

His answer, when he came back to me, was startling, but I kept it quiet from the passengers. We were aleak, and badly.

Instantly both pumps were manned. Our rice was in tierces, and if I could keep the water down so it would not reach them, make the rice swell and burst out into bulk, and so choke the pumps, all might yet be well. What became of the vessel we had run into we could only surmise. What could be seen as she drifted past made us think she was sinking.

Oh, how manfully my noble crew worked through the rest of the dark, fearful night, while I headed the brig off across the gulf for the nearest land on the Bahama side.

When welcome daylight came, with four feet of water in our hold, the male passengers helping the crew at the pumps, the gale still at its height, I made an examination forward, and found that our cut-water was all torn away, the bow-planks fearfully stove in, and then I knew it was but a question of time, and short time, at that, to keep the gallant brig afloat.

But every hour told. We were scudding for land, and might make a harbor yet. This word was carried into the cabin, to cheer the ladies, while every man lent his aid to keep our craft afloat, except a detail, headed by Mr. Booth, who had orders to have the only seaworthy boat got ready for use, and to rig a raft of our spars and some tight, strong water-casks, to use in the last emergency.

It came about ten o'clock in the day, with land—Abaco—in sight, ten miles or less ahead. The rice-tierces had got stove, or some of them, at least, the pumps began to choke, and the water poured in thrice as fast as we could get it out.

But the wind lessened some, and as we left the gulf the sea began to go down a little.

Our raft was now ready. It was a rude but strong structure—topmasts, yards, and booms lashed together, and along its sides and at either end empty water-casks securely fastened. Over all ropes were drawn, to hold on by, a small quantity of food and drink lashed in among the spars.

The boat, we knew, could not live in the sea then rolling, but she was kept ready if she could be used when the fatal hour, the sinking of the brig, arrived.

It came when the land was not more than five or six miles away, when all hands were on deck, the ladies placed on the raft, and it was ready to launch when the water was over the decks. The brig gave a sudden lurch, a plunge, and, quick as thought, we were all in the water, in the vortex made as she went down, bows first.

Then our life-raft came into play. Buoyant with the air-tight casks, it floated light on the heaving sea, and though our boat filled and capsized, the raft was right side up, and to it every soul on board was indebted for their life.

Fortunately, wrecking-sloops were in the little sheltered harbor of Abaco, good spy-glasses had been set in our direction, and relief was at hand.

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